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Hairy PotHead

AND THE MARIJUANA STONE

BY DANA LARSEN



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Haiky PotHead

AND THE MARIJUANA STONE

A pot-filled parody by Dana Larsen.

Edited by Marc Emery • Illustrated by Gary Wintle • Pot-leaf lettering by Art Penn • Layout designed by Gale Leitch

CHAPTER ONE

The Last of the Line



An old man stood in the nighttime shadows on the end of Mainstream Drive. He was tall and thin, with long silver hair and an even longer beard, which was tucked under a belt whose buckle was a large, silver, seven-pointed leaf.

His blazing red eyes were hidden behind half-moon mirrored spectacles, which sat on the tip of a long, crooked nose. He wore a heavy purple cloak with blue trim, pants with yellow and red stripes, and a long undercoat interwoven with intricate patterns of the same leaf as that on his belt. The leaf appeared again on the large buckles that adorned his knee-high boots. All of his clothes were made of pure hemp.

The man's name was Alwaze Duinthadope. He reeked of marijuana so strongly that police dogs were howling thirty blocks downwind.

Duinthadope didn't seem to realize that he was

in a neighborhood where everything from his scent to his buckles was unwelcome. He glanced up at the thin sliver of moon and looked impatiently at his wristwatch, which had five hands and the number 4 at all twelve points on the dial.

"Almost 4:20 in Moscow..." he muttered to himself. "I hope he gets here soon."

Duinthadope reached into an inner pocket and pulled out a thick joint of pungent marijuana, lighting it and slipping it between his lips in one smooth motion. He took a long, strong drag, drawing the aromatic smoke deeply into his powerful lungs, then expelling it through his nose in a thick, steady stream.

A woman emerged from the shadows across the street, and walked briskly in Duinthadope's direction. She had a severe look, and wore heavy square glasses with markings on them like the spots on a cat. She, too, was wearing a thick hempen cloak, hers of emerald green. Her black hair was drawn into a tight bun, inside of which was hidden a carefully wrapped stash of potent pot-infused toffees.

When she was next to him, Duinthadope smiled grimly and passed her the joint. The woman looked distinctly ruffled, but her mood seemed to mellow as she took a slightly lighter hit than Duinthadope, then

cupped the joint in both her hands and inhaled the smoke coming from the blazing tip.

"Fancy seeing you here, Professor McGanjagal," said Duinthadope quietly, his mirrored glasses reflecting the spot of orange glowing in the darkness.

McGanjagal tilted her head back and blew a series of smoke rings in the air before handing the joint back to Duinthadope. Any passer-by would have smelled their smoke, but seen only the red cherry moving in the dark shadows between suburban houses.

"You know what they're saying?" McGanjagal asked quietly, then continued without waiting for a reply. "They're saying that Whats-his-face himself led the raid on the Pothead's grow-house. They say that he killed the Potheads, that Mary-Jane and Jay Pothead are dead!"

Duinthadope took the joint away from his mouth, and bowed his head sadly. Professor McGanjagal gasped.

"Mary-Jane and Jay... I can't believe it... I don't want to believe it... Oh, Alwaze..."

Duinthadope reached out and patted her on the shoulder. "I know, I know..." he said heavily.

"That's not all," she continued, after a moment. "They also said that he tried to kill the Pothead's son, Hairy. That he went there to kill them all, but that when he tried to kill Hairy Pothead, Whats-his-face was trapped in the fire, possibly killed in the blaze, burned to death."

"I certainly hope so," replied Duinthadope, "although apparently his body has not been recovered. But come now, can't we call him by his proper name? Officer Pasdepot." Professor McGanjagal flinched at the name, but Duinthadope seemed not to notice.

"But it's true?" faltered Professor McGanjagal. "After all he's done, the lives he's ruined, he was stopped while trying to kill a little boy? It's just astounding..."

She was interrupted by a low rumbling sound that broke the silence around them. It grew steadily louder as a huge motorbike with sidecar came roaring around the corner and into view. The man riding appeared massive, looking bigger than humanly possible, with wild, long tangles of dark red hair, and a thick, bushy beard that hid most of his face. He was clad almost entirely in leather, from heavy black boots to a leather jacket with a patch on the shoulder of a winged skull wearing a red helmet. He stopped the engine, reached into the sidecar with his vast, muscular arms, and took out a small bundle of blankets.

"Hogride!" said Duinthadope, striding forward and taking the bundle from the biker's arms. "At last! Did anyone follow you?"

"No sir," said the giant, climbing off the motorbike. "Tha 'ouse was almos' destroyed, but I got 'im out all

right afore the cops started ta swarm aroun'. He fell asleep while we was drivin' 'ere."

McGanjagal passed the still burning joint to Hogride, who took it between his thick fingers and inhaled the rest of it in one, long toke. Then she bent over the bundle of blankets as Duinthadope opened them to peer inside. They could see a baby boy, fast asleep. Under a tuft of thick brown hair on his forehead, they could see a curiously shaped cut, like a seven-pointed leaf.

"Is that what I think it is?" whispered Professor McGanjagal.

"Yes," said Duinthadope. "He'll have that scar forever."

"Couldn't you put some hemp oil salve on there to help it heal?"

"Even if I could, I wouldn't," replied Duinthadope. "Scars can come in useful. I have one myself above my left knee that is a miniature map of all my outdoor crops on the West Coast. Anyways, let's get this over with."

Duinthadope turned towards a nearby house.

"Could I – could I say goodbye ta him, sir?" asked Hogride sheepishly, flicking the tiny roach from his hand.

He bent his great, shaggy head over Hairy and exhaled a thick cloud of sweet smoke which surrounded the sleeping child, then leaned in closer and gave him a very scratchy, whiskery kiss. Suddenly, Hogride let out a wail like a wounded pit bull.

"Shhh!" hissed Professor McGanjagal. "You'll wake the Squares!"

"S-s-sorry," sobbed Hogride, taking out a large hemp handkerchief and burying his face in it. "But I c-c-can't stand it – Mary-Jane and Jay dead – an' poor little 'airy off ter live with Squares -"

"It's the best place for him," said Duinthadope firmly. "His aunt and uncle will be able to explain everything to him when he's older. I've written them a letter."

"A letter?" repeated Professor McGanjagal faintly. "Really, Duinthadope, you think you can explain all this in a letter? These people will never understand him. This boy is a Pothead! I doubt these folks have ever had a toke in their lives."

"Exactly," said Duinthadope. "Where better to hide the boy until things blow over? He'll be better growing up here, away from all of that, until he's ready to take it."

Duinthadope turned and stepped over the low garden wall, then walked to the front door. He laid Hairy gently on the doorstep, took a letter written on hemp paper out of his cloak and tucked it inside Hairy's blankets, then came back to join his two companions.

They stood and looked at the bundle, then

Duinthadope lit another joint and they shared it in silence.

"Well," said Duinthadope finally, "that's that. We've no business staying here."

Wiping his streaming eyes on his jacket sleeve, Hogride silently swung himself onto the motorbike and kicked the engine to life. With a roar he rode off into the night.

"I shall see you soon I expect, Professor McGanjagal," said Duinthadope, nodding to her. She smiled wanly, popped a toffee into her mouth, and turned to walk away.

Duinthadope walked the other way, lighting up another joint as he went. "Good luck, Hairy," he murmured, as he disappeared into the darkness and a fresh cloud of pungent smoke.

A breeze ruffled the hedges of Mainstream Drive, which lay silent and tidy under the moonlit sky. Hairy Pothead rolled over inside his soft hemp blankets without waking up. One small hand closed on the letter beside him, his other hand clutching a small seed which even Duinthadope hadn't noticed.

Hairy slept on, not knowing that he was special, not knowing that his parents had died in a fire sparked during a raid on their home marijuana garden... not knowing that he would be woken in a few hours time by Mrs. Straitley's screams as she opened the front door to put out the recycling, nor that he would spend the next few weeks being jabbed and poked by his cousin Studly... He couldn't know that at this very moment, people meeting in secret all over the country were holding up their bongos, and saying in hushed voices: "To Hairy Pothead – the last of the line!"

CHAPTER TWO

A Letter from Hempwards



Nearly fifteen years had passed since Norm and Vanilla Straitley had woken up to find their nephew on their front step, but Mainstream Drive had hardly changed at all. The sun rose on the same well-manicured lawn and lit up the plastic number six on the Straitley's front door; it crept into their living room, which

showed almost no sign that Hairy Pothead also inhabited this house. Yet he was still there, asleep at the moment, until Aunt Vanilla's shrill voice woke him to begin the day.

"Up! Get up! Now!"

Hairy woke with a jerk. His aunt rapped on the door again.

"Up!" she screeched. Hairy rolled onto his back and tried to remember the dream he had been having. It had been a good one. He had been in a magical garden, surrounded by strange plants. He had a funny feeling he'd had the same dream before.

His aunt was back outside the door.

"Are you up yet?" she demanded.

"Nearly," said Hairy.

"Well get a move on. I want you to get busy. We have a lot of work to do in preparation for my Studster's birthday."

Hairy groaned.

"Did you say something?" snapped his aunt through the door.

"No, nothing..." sighed Hairy.

March 20th, Studly's birthday. How could he have forgotten? Hairy reached up and pulled the chain hanging from the bare bulb above him. He winced as the harsh light illuminated the small closet, for that was where he slept.

As he dressed, Hairy looked at the spindly, thin plant growing in the corner of his sparse room. He had kept the tiny seed safe for all those years, and only two months earlier had he finally decided to plant it. He hadn't dared to put it outside, so he had used the cracked teacup the Straitleys had given him as Christmas gift. Filled with dirt, it made a suitable planter, and the seed had sprouted and grown into a pale, scraggly plant, no more than six inches tall.

Perhaps because he also lived in a small, dark closet, Hairy was equally small and skinny for his age. He looked even smaller and skinnier than he really was, because all he wore were the old polyester clothes of Studly, and Studly was about four times bigger than he was. Hairy had a thin face, knobby knees, bright green eyes, and hair that grew in thick dreadlocks no matter how Hairy tried to comb it. He wore round glasses, held together with sticky tape because of all the times Studly had punched him on the nose.

The only thing Hairy liked about his own appearance was a very thin scar upon his forehead, which was shaped like a seven-pointed leaf. He had had it for as long as he could remember, and the first question he



could remember asking was how he had gotten it.

"In the car crash when your parents died," Aunt Vanilla had told him. "And don't ask questions!"

Don't ask questions. That was the first rule for getting along with the Straitleys.

Hairy came into the kitchen, where Aunt Vanilla was busy cooking and baking, preparing goodies for Studly's birthday party. Uncle Norm was sitting at the table, reading the newspaper. He was a big beefy man with a large mustache and hardly any neck. He peered over the top of his paper and yelled, "Get a haircut!" Hairy must have had more haircuts than any other boy his age, but it made no difference. His hair grew in thick dreadlocks no matter what he did.

Aunt Vanilla opened the oven and removed a steaming tray of cupcakes. She was blonde and thin and had twice the usual amount of neck, which came in very useful as she spent so much of her time craning over fences, spying on the neighbors. Too busy to speak, she motioned at Hairy with her free hand, pointing him towards a note on the fridge. Hairy pulled it free from its magnet, and read his list of chores for the day. First, collect the mail, help in cleaning and decorating the house for the birthday party, then all the rest.

Hairy went to the door and began putting on his coat and boots. Mr. Straitley put down his newspaper and barked at him. "Now Hairy, you need to finish your chores quickly today, and get back into your closet before Studly's guests arrive. You remember your instructions?"

"Yes sir. I'm to stay in my room, making no noise and pretending I'm not there," answered Hairy in a monotone.

"That's right you will," said Uncle Norm forcefully. "I don't want you bothering Studly's friends or wrecking his birthday party."

Hairy left through the back door. It was a brilliant, sunny day. He blinked and looked around the garden as his eyes adjusted to the bright light, then did a double take as he realized there was a pair of enormous bulging eyes staring back at him through the hedge! He blinked again, and they were gone.

Hairy quickly crossed the lawn and peered around the hedge, but no one was there. He knew Mr. Straitley didn't like it when he took too long to fetch the mail, so he walked to the postbox and took out the day's letters. He flipped through the envelopes as he walked back to the house. Bills, junk flyers, fundraising letters, more bills, Studly's subscription to *Guns & Ammo Quarterly*, and a curiously thick letter in a green envelope made of heavy paper. Hairy was amazed to see his name on the front!

Mr. H. Pothead

The Closet under the Stairs

#6 Mainstream Drive

Nowheresville

Hairy's heart thumped like a beat box. He had never received a letter before in his life! He turned it over, his hand trembling. On the back was a purple wax seal bearing a coat of arms: a large letter H surrounded by what looked like a hand-rolled cigarette, a pipe, a gourd and a crossed set of knives. In the bottom corner of the envelope there were tiny words saying "100% hemp."

Hairy went back into the kitchen, still staring at his letter. He handed Uncle Norm the bills, put Studly's magazine on the table, and sat down. He carefully tore open the edge of the envelope so as not to break the wax seal, then pulled out a heavy piece of parchment.

Studly walked into the kitchen, scratching his head and yawning. He saw the opened envelope on the table, and Hairy unfolding the paper. He stopped still and pointed at his cousin. "Dad! What's Hairy got? Who sent him a letter?"

"Huh?" said Mr. Straitley, raising his eyes from reading his bills. He saw Hairy's eyes scanning the letter, then reached out and snatched it from his hands.

"That's mine!" said Hairy, trying to grab it back.

"Who'd be writing to you?" sneered Uncle Norm, shaking the letter open with one hand and glancing at it. His face went from red to green faster than a set of traffic lights. Within seconds it had changed again, from green to grey.

"G-g-go!" he gasped. "Hairy, get to your room, now!"

"I want to read that letter!" shouted Hairy.

"OUT!" roared Uncle Norm, stuffing the letter into his pocket and rising up from his chair.

"I WANT MY LETTER!" yelled Hairy.

Uncle Norm grabbed Hairy by the scruff of his neck, carried him forcefully all the way back to his closet, and threw him inside. Norm then latched the door, locking Hairy into the tiny room.

"YOU WILL STAY THERE IN SILENCE!" roared Mr. Straitley, "OR YOU WON'T EAT FOR A WEEK!"

Hairy pushed futilely against the door, banged his fist against it and then sank down in misery. He closed his eyes, trying desperately to remember exactly what he had seen written on that parchment.

The ink had been green, the words written in a fancy, flowing script. Each letter had looked like a serrated leaf. He understood the words, but their meaning was strange and mysterious: HEMPWARDS SCHOOL OF HERBCRAFT AND WEEDERY.

There had been more, but that's all Hairy had been able to read before the letter was torn from his grip. Head in hands, he tried to visualize the letter, but it faded from his mind as he heard his Uncle's voice coming up the passage.

"Vanilla, look at the address. How could they know where he sleeps? Could they be... watching the house?"

"What should we do Norm?" came his aunt's plaintive reply. "Should we write back, tell them we don't want..."

"No, it's best if we just ignore it. No answer, no problems. That's best, we won't do a thing..."

"But —"

"I'm not having one in the house Vanilla! Didn't we swear when we took him in, that we'd stamp out that dangerous nonsense? I'm burning the letter, and that's the end of it! Now let's get ready for Studly's birthday!"

Hairy groaned and opened his eyes. He knew he would be spending the rest of the day locked in his room, lying on his bed.

The trouble was, there was already someone sitting on it.

CHAPTER THREE

The Home Invasion



Hairy managed not to shout out, but it was a close thing. The little man sitting on his bed looked like he was ready for Halloween, although far too old to be going trick-or-treating. He was wearing large, rubber, goblin-shaped ears and huge bulging glasses with eyeballs painted on their lenses. Hairy knew instantly that this was who had been watching him out of the garden hedge that morning.

As they stared at each other, Hairy heard the doorbell ring. The first of Studly's birthday guests had arrived.

"Hairy Pothead!" said the dwarf, sitting up excitedly as he saw Hairy. He spoke in a high-pitched voice Hairy was sure would be heard down the hall. "So long have I wanted to meet you sir, so honored am I..."

"Please be quiet!" hissed Hairy, knowing he would be blamed for any odd events or noises. He began edging along the wall and towards the single chair in

his room, eyeing the strange man nervously.

"Yes sir, sorry sir," murmured the little man automatically, wrapping his brown cloak around him closely.

"Who are you?" asked Hairy. "What are you?" He could hear the sounds of Studly loudly counting the presents from his guests, and the bell ringing again as more arrived.

"Dooby, sir!" whispered the little man excitedly. "This one is called Dooby. I am but a humble servant, come to warn you sir, to save your holy life. Hairy Pothead must not go to Hempwards!"

Hairy's mind reeled. Hempwards! That was the name on the letter! "What do you know about Hempwards?" he whispered fiercely at the strange little man. "What are you talking about?"

"I come with a warning, dear Hairy Pothead! There is great danger, most terrible things can happen at Hempwards School. You must not put your sacred self in peril. You are the last of the line, you are too important!"

Hairy shook his head to clear his thoughts. This was turning into a very odd day! He heard more guests arriving, and knew the Straitley living room would soon be full of obnoxious little boys and their twittering mothers, all being ignored by Studly as he tore open his gifts and tossed them into a growing pile. It was a ritual Hairy had gone through every year of his life.

Dooby held his head in his hands and looked downwards. "If only Dooby had been quicker sir," he moaned sadly. "If only I could have reached the mailbox today before the most noble Hairy Pothead, all this could have been prevented. Twice before I came on time, but today I failed!"

"What on earth are you trying to say?" asked Hairy, starting to get annoyed. "And how did you get in here, anyways?"

The little man opened his mouth to speak, but suddenly there was the roar of an engine, followed by an ominous pause, and then a loud commotion coming from down the hall. Hairy heard children begin wailing, mothers screeching, and Mr. Straitley's voice thundering and above the din.

"Close the door Vanilla! Don't let him in!"

Hairy heard the front door slamming shut, and looked back at Dooby. From the expression of shock on the little man's face, Hairy could see that Dooby was as surprised by the commotion as he was.

BOOM! The whole house shook, and Hairy knew someone had hit the front door harder than it had even been struck before.

BOOM! There was another house-shaking crash, knocking Hairy's small radio alarm clock to the floor, where it began to blink 11:11 repeatedly.

BOOM! A third crash made Hairy stagger and knocked the latch from his closet door, letting it swing open a crack.

Hairy ran to the door and pushed it open just enough to peek out. Despite the extraordinary circumstances, he knew Mr. Straitley would still punish him for coming out of the closet with guests in the home. Through the sliver of opened door Hairy could see straight down the hall and to the entranceway. He could see his uncle standing to block the closed front door, his body quivering either in rage or in fear. He was yelling commands at anyone who would listen.

"Stop crying! Call the police! Barricade the door! Clear the..."

Norm never got to complete that last sentence, as another loud BOOM took the door right off the hinges, sending it crashing down against him. Norm was knocked off his feet and lay prone on the floor, the door on top of him.

A giant of a man strode through the doorway and stood upon the door, making Uncle Straitley groan in agony beneath. The giant's face was almost completely hidden by a long, shaggy mane of hair and a wild, tangled beard. His eyes, black and bloodshot, glinted under all the hair. His teeth were gripped around a half-smoked smoldering cigar.

The giant took the cigar from his mouth and exhaled a tremendous cloud of smoke, which seemed to fill the entire house as it flowed from his massive lungs. Hairy heard a wave of coughs and gags coming from Studly's guests in the living room, but to him the smell was pleasant. Beneath the strong scent of the tobacco, he smelled something strange, something that seemed hauntingly, wonderfully familiar.

The giant put the cigar back into his mouth, stepped off the door and strode down the hallway, heading directly for Hairy. He grabbed the closet door in one huge hand and yanked it open, dragging Hairy into the hallway with the force of his pull.

"ere's 'airy!" said the giant, reaching down and grasping the frail, frightened young boy by both shoulders. Hairy looked into the fierce, wild, shadowy face, and saw that the eyes were crinkled into a smile.

"Yeh look a lot like yer da," said the giant. "But yeh've got yer mum's eyes."

The giant paused to take another huge draw from his cigar. Hairy turned his head and saw that Vanilla and another neighborhood mother had managed to get the door off of Mr. Straitley, who was now pushing himself up from the floor, huffing and puffing as he rose.

"I demand that you leave at once!" he spluttered. "You are breaking and entering! We will be calling the police!"

"Shut yer face Strai'ley, yeh great buzzkill!" yelled the giant, pointing a thick, hairy finger at the quivering man and snorting smoke out of his nostrils.

Hairy glanced back into his closet, and saw that Dooby had somehow vanished. Then the giant grabbed him by both shoulders again and whisked him right off the floor. Hairy found himself being carried down the hall and into the living room, where a stunned Studly stood silently against the wall, watching his ruined party in shock and agony. Terrified mothers and wailing children rushed out of their path, streaming out the smashed front doorway.

"I didn't mean ta bust down yer door like that," said the giant to Hairy in a gentler tone, "but Duinthadope said I had ta wait before comin' ter get yeh. Wait until yeh had yer final official letter, before I could come an' take yeh away!"

Hairy noticed that, upon hearing the giant's last words, his Uncle Straitley motioned to Vanilla in the kitchen, signaling her silently to put down the phone, which she had doubtlessly been using to call the local authorities.

Hairy was tossed upon the now empty couch, which creaked and sagged as the giant biker dropped his massive bulk onto it next to him. With one stroke of the giant's muscled arm, the entire pile of Studly's half-opened presents was swept to the floor. Studly ran out of the room, wailing.

"airy," said the giant, rummaging down deep through the inside pockets on his heavy black coat, "I got summat fer yeh here, lemme just find it."

"Who are you?" asked Hairy, unsure of what else to say.

The giant chuckled and reached out to tousle Hairy's dreads, then went back to searching his many pockets as he spoke. "Yeh don' reco'nize me, eh? No surprise, las' time I saw yeh, yeh was only a babe! That was a dark day, but these be 'appier times now."

As he spoke, the giant began pulling items out of his pockets and placing them upon the table by the handful. A small pile began forming, made of many packs of rollies in assorted sizes and brands, two plastic Bic lighters, a Zippo brand lighter embossed with a flaming silver skull, a handful of roaches and cigar butts, assorted loose buds and pieces of hash, numerous small baggies and vials holding powders and liquids, a selection of oddly angular coins, bill-shaped pieces of paper with intricate designs and the word "Hempscript" written on them, a folded pair of scissors, a small wooden cylinder, a glass pipe covered in swirling colors, a wooden pipe, a snow globe with a castle inside, assorted packs of paper matches with cryptic messages scrawled under their covers, two but-

tons with “Route 81” written on them, a variety of pills in different shapes and colors, and on it went.

The giant finally pulled out a narrow, elaborately carved wooden box, and placed it on the table in front of them. Then he took a final, huge draw off of the stub of the cigar, and squashed it into a cup he had knocked to the floor.

The giant turned his massive, hairy face towards Hairy. “I am Ruderalis Hogride,” he said, exhaling another huge blast of sweet smoke. “Cleaner of tha Bongs and Keeper of tha Gardens at ‘empwards.”

“What were you smoking?” asked Hairy, pointing at the cigar stub.

Hogride smiled and chuckled slightly. “Yeh never hear of a blunt? It’s marijuana inside a tobacco cigar. Yeh’ll learn all about ‘em at ‘empwards.”

“Maree-wanna?” asked Hairy blankly. He had never heard this strange word before, but for some reason he liked the way it sounded; it seemed to make his heart beat faster just hearing it. “What’s that?”

“Wha’s marijuana!” asked the giant. His broad smile sagged into a frown as he turned his attention fully onto the young boy. “Surely yer jokin’ lad, I’m talkin’ about cannabis, tha ‘oly ‘erb, tha ganja, tha chronic, tha kind buds!”

“Sorry,” said Hairy.

“Sorry?” barked Hogride, turning his head towards the trembling Norm Straitley, who shrank back into the shadows. “It’s them as should be sorry! I knew yeh was in hidin’, but I never thought yeh’d be raised with no knowin’ of tha sacred seed! Yeh know anythin’ of ‘empwards? Did yeh not ever wonder where yer parents learned it all?”

“Learned all what?”

“ALL WHAT?” roared Hogride, leaping to his feet. He turned to face Mr. Straitley, stabbing with his finger as he yelled. “Do you mean to tell me that this boy – this boy! – knows nothin’ about his history, the world’s history? He knows nothin’ about nothin’?”

“I know some things,” said Hairy, a flush rising on his cheeks. “I do read books and watch television sometimes.”

Hogride snorted and waved his hand dismissively. “About our world, I mean. Yer world, my world, yer parents’ world.”

“What world?”

Hogride looked as if he was about to burst. He ran his fingers through his hair in exasperation. “Yeh never told him? Yeh never showed him tha letter from Duinthadope? What about tha admissions letter?” Mr. Straitley glanced involuntarily at his coat pocket, which had the thick piece of paper still sticking up out of it.

Hogride followed Norm’s eyes, then leapt forward,

seized Norm’s arm before he could grab the paper, and with his other hand he reached into the trembling man’s pocket and snatched out the letter. Then he released Norm and shoved him backwards.

Hogride turned back to Hairy and tossed the crumpled document onto the table in front of him. “Yeh don’t know what yeh are?”

“STOP, I FORBID YOU!” yelled Uncle Norm in a panic.

Hogride ignored Mr. Straitley’s final, desperate plea. “‘airy,” he said, grabbing the boy by the shoulders and looking him in the eyes. “Yer a Weedster!”

CHAPTER FOUR

The Marijuana Stone



here was silence in the room.

“I’m a what?” gasped Hairy after a pause.

“A Weedster, o’ course,” said Hogride, releasing Hairy and sitting back down on the sofa, which groaned and sank even lower under his bulk. “With a ma an’ da like yers, wha’ else could yeh be?”

Hogride slid the top off of the wooden box, and immediately the strong smell of potent marijuana buds filled the room, mixing with the scent of the recently smoked blunt. Hogride pulled a fat bud from out the box, and crumbled it expertly between his thick fingers. He then picked up a large pack of rollies with “Smoking Green” written on them and slipped out a huge paper. Using the small folding scissors, Hogride snipped a strip off of the pack’s cover and rolled it into a filter.

As Hogride prepared a massive joint, Hairy grabbed the letter from the table and smoothed it out on the edge of the couch. Then he held it up and read it to himself.

HEMPWARDS SCHOOL OF HERBCRAFT AND WEEDERY

Master Head, Alwaze Duinthadope

(Beatnik First Class, Grand Stoner, Chief Bongmeister, Toker Supreme, International Confederation of Weedsters, High Council of Canabians)

Dear Mr. H. Pothead,

This letter is your final confirmation that you have a place at Hempwards School of Herbcraft and Weedery.

As per our earlier two letters, please find enclosed

a list of all necessary books and equipment.
Term begins 4:20 am, March 21st, Spring Equinox.
Yours sincerely,
Moruvva McGanjagal
Deputy Mistress Head

Questions fizzed inside Hairry's head like a shaken bottle of pop, and he couldn't decide which to ask first. Norm spoke before Hairry could collect his thoughts.

"He's not going," he said.

Hogride grunted. He had the rolling paper in his fingers and was packing it full of the crumbled buds.

"I'd like ta see a feeble Square like yeh try an' stop him," he muttered.

"A what?" asked Hairry, intently.

"A Square," said Hogride, licking the paper to seal it shut. "It's what we call non-tokers like them. An' it's yer bad luck that yeh grew up in a family o' tha biggest Squares I ever laid eyes on."

"We swore when we took him in that we'd put a stop to that rubbish," said Uncle Norm, "we swore we'd grind it out of him! Weedster indeed!"

"You knew?" said Hairry. "You knew I'm a – a Weedster?"

"Knew?" shrieked Aunt Vanilla suddenly, storming into the living room from where she had been hiding in the kitchen. "Knew?! Of course we knew! How could you not be, my dratted sister being what she was? Oh she had her hair in dreads too, and she was always listening to that damnable raggae music! She got a letter just like that, and disappeared off to that school, and come home every holiday with her pockets full of hashish, reeking of that disgusting smell! I was the only one who saw her for what she was – a criminal and a freak! But for my mother and father, oh no, it was Mary-Jane this and Mary-Jane that, they were proud of having a Weedster in the family!"

She stopped to draw a deep breath, and then went on ranting. From the speed the words poured out it seemed that she had been wanting to say all of this for years. Hogride lit the huge joint and began puffing away, once again filling the house with smoke.

"Then she met that Pothead at school, and they left and got married, and had you! Of course I knew you'd be just the same, just as stoned, just as – as – spaced-out! And then, if you please, she went and got her house burned down with them both in it, and we got stuck with you!"

Hairry had gone very white. He found his voice, and said, "House burned down? You told me they died in a car crash!"

"CAR CRASH!" roared Hogride, jumping up so angrily that Mr. Straitley cringed in fear. "Tha's an outrage! A

scandal! A dirty damn lie!"

"Why? What really happened?" asked Hairry urgently.

The anger drained from Hogride's face. He suddenly looked anxious.

"Och, 'airy, I don' know if I'm tha right person ta tell yeh, but someone's gotta. Some parts are a myst'ry! But it's best if yeh know as much as yeh can..."

Hogride sat back down and looked into Hairry's eyes for a moment, then looked away as he began to speak.

"It begins, I s'pose, with a person called... Aw, I don't like sayin' tha name if I can help it."

"Why not?"

"By tha leaf an' tha flower, 'airy, people are still scared. He infiltrated us deep, hurt many people... As bad as you could go, he was worse. His name was... Officer Pasdepot."

Hogride shuddered. "Anyways, this fellow, Officer Whats-his-face, most folks think he was originally a Weedster. But he switched on us, he turned traitor and he joined the other side. It was dark times. Didn't know who ta trust. Didn't dare get friendly with strange Weedsters. Terrible things was happenin'. He was takin' over. Some stood up ta him, but they was busted, or killed. Only one of tha safe places left was 'empwards. Reckon Duinthadope's the only one that Whats-his-face is afraid of.

"Now, yer ma an' da were as good a pair of Weedsters as I ever knew. The highest heads at 'empwards in their day. No-one knew how Officer Whats-his-face found 'em, or why he wanted them so bad. All anyone knows is, he turned up in the suburb where yeh was all livin', fifteen years ago. He came to yer 'ouse, an' – an' –"

Hogride picked a large handkerchief from his pile of belongings on the table, passed his joint to Hairry, and blew his nose loudly.

"He burned down their 'ouse! He killed them! An' he tried ter kill yeh too. But summat wen' wrong, He couldn't do it, an' he got caught in tha fire, an' he hasn't been seen nor heard from since! I took yeh from tha burnin' 'ouse meself, on Duinthadope's command. Brought yeh ta this lot."

"What a load of horseradish!" said Uncle Norm. Hairry jumped, he had almost forgotten that the Straitley's were there. "I accept that there's something strange about you boy, probably nothing a good beating wouldn't have cured, but as for all this about your parents, well, they were weirdos. The world's better off without them, there's no denying it. They asked for all they got, getting mixed up with those weedhead types. I always knew they'd get burned up just like one of their ruddy joints."

Hogride began to rise again, his fists clenched in anger, but Hairy put his hand gently on Hogride's leg to restrain him.

"Hogride," he said quietly. "I think you must have made a mistake. I don't know anything about marijuana. I can't be a Weedster."

"Not a Weedster, eh?" Hogride looked at Hairy with surprising fondness. "Wha's tha' in yer mouth, then?"

Hairy reached up and touched the thick joint that was hanging between his lips. He realized he had unconsciously put it there when Hogride had passed it to him. He inhaled, tentatively at first, then deeply. The smoke filled his lungs. It felt good, it felt natural, and it was delicious!

Hairy felt like the smoke flowed from his lungs and into every part of his body. He felt it filling him, touching him from the inside, and becoming part of him. His mind filled with smoke. He felt his thoughts expanding, his head opening up with new ideas and connections.

Hairy closed his eyes. His thoughts were moving so fast that he felt like time was slowing down. His skin felt prickly. He inhaled again, even more deeply, and then felt Hogride pluck the joint from his mouth.

"Take it easy, 'airy," said Hogride.

Keeping his eyes closed, Hairy took a deep breath of air. He felt almost like he was floating. Intricate patterns of colors streamed past his eyes. His mind was reeling with profound ideas, each new revelation whizzing by too fast for him to remember. He could hear Uncle Norm speaking, but the words didn't seem to make any sense.

Hairy opened his eyes. He looked around the room, his eyes blazing. He looked at Norm and Vanilla, and felt as if he was seeing them for the first time. He saw them not as his terrifying Uncle and his manipulative Aunt, but as two human beings, flawed, scared, lonely and confused, yet also noble and magnificent. Hairy felt like he understood them. Even though they were both ruddy great gits who had made his life miserable for fifteen years, at that moment, Hairy forgave them.

Hairy smirked. Then he chuckled. He tried to hold it in but he could not, and suddenly a great spurt of laughter burst out of him.

Hairy laughed harder than he had ever laughed in his life. He suddenly got it! He got everything, and it was hilarious! Hairy laughed until he couldn't breathe. He thought of his life, his miserable sad life, and he laughed at what a loser he was. He thought of his parents, who he loved so much but would never get to meet, and he laughed at his sadness. He laughed until his sides hurt. He laughed and laughed until he was on the floor, guffawing uncontrollably. Hairy suddenly felt scared that he would never stop laughing, then he

burst out in a fresh body-shaking blast of hilarity.

"Come on 'airy," said Hogride, reaching down to him with one meaty hand and pulling him to a standing position. "It's time fer us ta be goin'"

Hairy was still giggling like an idiot, but the wave of overwhelming hilarity had passed, and he could function again, if not speak.

"Git whatever yeh need from yer room," said Hogride, "an' we can talk more on tha way. I can't stand ta be here no more."

Hairy turned and stumbled down the hall and through the door to his closet. Had it really been less than an hour since he had discovered the strange little man in his room? He glanced around the sparse space, knowing there was nothing he wanted to take. Nothing except the scraggly little plant that he had lovingly tended for the past two months. Hairy grabbed the teacup in which it was growing, then made his way back down the hall, the thin plant swaying in its tiny home.

Back in the living room he saw Vanilla and Norm standing, unmoved. They were both quivering slightly, trembling in a strange combination of rage, fear and relief that Hairy was finally about to be out of their lives.

The front door of the house still lay on the floor, and through the archway Hairy could see Hogride climbing onto a massive motorcycle with the words "Harley Davidson" written on the tank. He waved his hand at Hairy and gestured at him to come over.

Hairy walked slowly past his aunt and uncle, unable to meet their gaze. "Good – goodbye," he muttered and ran out the door. He wondered for a moment whether he would be riding behind Hogride, but then he saw the sidecar, with the word "Liberty" emblazoned upon the back. Hogride looked over and chuckled as Hairy placed his fragile plant under his seat.

"Couldn't leave yer Headstash behind, eh?"

Hairy didn't know what a Headstash was, but he liked the sound of it. Headstash... that would be a great name for his plant, he mused, climbing into the sidecar.

Hogride kicked the starter and the engine roared noisily to life. Hairy could see neighbors peeking out of their windows at the strange spectacle that had unfolded in his home. Hairy closed his eyes and lay his



head back against the support. He felt safe, at peace, and so very tired. It wasn't even noon, but it seemed like it had been a terribly long day. He felt the rocking of the sidecar and the roar of the engine sending him drifting off to sleep.



CHAPTER FIVE

A Visit to Greengolds

Hairy awoke with the sun shining on his face, the wind whipping through his dreads, and the roar of an engine in his ears. For a moment he thought he was on a boat, but then the memories came flooding back. The letter, the dwarf, the giant, and Hempwards!

Hairy opened his eyes, and saw that Hogride was expertly maneuvering the motorcycle through crowded city streets. In fifteen years, Hairy had never been more than a few blocks from the Straitley's home, so pretty much everything seemed unfamiliar to him. Hairy looked down and saw that Headstash, his scraggly pot plant, was still safe in its teacup between his feet.

"How long was I sleeping?" asked Hairy, shouting the question over the sound of the motor and the wind.

"Oy, yeh startled me!" shouted back Hogride, glancing at the thin teenager. "Yeh had a nice, long nap, it's been a few hours since yeh passed out. Can't say as I blames yeh, as yeh got yerself pretty stoned!"

Hairy didn't know what Hogride was talking about; he couldn't remember rocks of any sort. He did remember having two sensational puffs off of the Hogride-rolled cigarette, but things got a bit fuzzy after that.

Hairy asked a different question.

"Where are we going?"

"We've got ta get yeh yer 'empwards school kit. Books an' bongs an' stuff," hollered back Hogride, guiding the bike around a sharp corner. "Hang on, I've got summat for yeh here." The huge biker let go of one handlebar and started reaching into coat pockets as if looking for something. Then he wasn't holding onto the handlebars at all, instead patting down his leather coat and frantically digging both hands into all of his countless pockets. "Oy, 'ere it is," he said, pulling out a crumpled bit of paper and passing it to Hairy.

Hairy waited until Hogride had both hands safely back on the handlebars before unfolding the paper. He held it tightly in both hands to protect it from the whipping winds, and read:



HEMPWARDS SCHOOL OF HERBCRAFT AND WEEDERY

Uniform

First year students will require:

- 1) Three sets pure hemp clothes in school colors
- 2) One plain hemp fanny pack
- 3) One pair mirrored sunglasses

Please note that all students' clothes should have nametags.

Books

All students should have a copy of each of the following:

- Hashish!, by Robert Connell Clarke
Marijuana Medicine, by Christian Ratsch
The Great Book of Hemp, by Rowan Robinson
The Emperor Wears No Clothes, by Jack Herer
Green Gold: The Tree of Life, by Chris Bennett
The Marijuana Grower's Handbook, by Ed Rosenthal
The Best of Cannabis Culture (Vol. I & II)
Marijuana, The First Twelve Thousand Years, by Ernest L. Abel
How to Hide Anything, by Michael Connor

Other Equipment

- 3 hemp paper notebooks
1 personal glass bong
1 small stone pipe
1 refillable butane lighter
6 packs pure hemp rolling papers (regular and extra-large)
1 set brass scales
1 herb grinder (plastic, wooden or metal)
1 stash tin

PARENTS ARE REMINDED
THAT FIRST YEARS ARE
NOT PERMITTED THEIR OWN
VAPORIZERS.

"Can we buy all this in town?" asked Hairy.

"If yeh know where ta look," replied Hogride, bringing the motorcycle to a sudden halt. "This is it." Hogride killed the engine and stepped off the bike.

Hairy looked around. He saw a bookstore, a record shop, a motorcycle repair garage, a gardening store and a cafe. He saw regular people, men in suits, women in dresses, young couples holding hands, families going out to see a show. This was just an ordinary street with ordinary people. Was there really a secret cabal of pot-

smoking fanatics around here somewhere?

"Bring yer li'l plant with yeh," said Hogride, "we can get it repotted while we're at it."

"Where are we?" asked Hairy as he clambered out of the sidecar and retrieved his precious Headstash.

"A very famous place," said Hogride, striding forward and patting down his jacket, beginning another search for something in one of his many pockets. "It's called tha Pot Block. Yeh'll need ta do some shoppin', but we gotta get yer money first."

"I haven't got any money," said Hairy, worried.

"Don't worry about that," said Hogride. "D'yeh think yer parents didn't leave yeh nothin'?"

"But if their house was burned down –"

"They didn't keep their wealth in tha house, lad! Nah, first stop for us is Greengolds, tha Weedsters' bank."

"Weedsters have banks?"

"Jus' tha one. Greengolds. Run by Angels. They have their own currency."

"Angels?" asked Hairy, astonished.

"Well, sor' of. So yeh'd be mad ta try an' rob it. Greengold's is tha safest place fer anythin' yeh want ta keep safe – 'cept maybe 'empwards."

They had reached the motorcycle shop, and Hairy saw a big sign saying "Route 81". It was a spacious garage, with motorcycles everywhere in various states of disassembly. Large, muscular men wearing oily coveralls were working on the bikes, and one walked over to greet them, wiping his huge hands on a rag.

"Oy! 'allo Rudy!" said the man, who was a match for Hogride in both size and accent. "It's fabulous ta see yeh!" He gripped Hogride's hand tightly and slapped his arm, then turned his attention to Hairy. "An' who's this then? 'oly smoke! Is this – can this be –?"

Route 81 had suddenly gone completely still and silent.

"By tha leaf an' tha flower," whispered the huge motorcyclist, taking Hairy's small hand and holding it earnestly. "'airy Pothead, what an honor."

Hairy didn't know what to say. Everyone was looking at him. Hogride was beaming. Then all the other mechanics came over and Hairy had to put down Headstash so he could shake hands with everyone there.

"Crankshaft, Helmut Crankshaft, Mr. Pothead. I can't believe I'm meeting you at last."

"So pleased, Mr. Pothead, so pleased to meet you."

"Fucking hey! It's fucking awesome to shake your hand, man!"

Hairy shook hands again and again. His hands were soon covered with motorcycle oil and grease. Eventually Hogride was forced to interrupt.

"Jerry, sorry ta intrude, we've gotta get to tha bank,

we're on a tight schedule. We've got a bus ta catch."

"Alright then. Yeh know where ta go."

Hairy picked up his fragile plant, and let Hogride guide him through the throng of mechanics, into the back of the garage. They went down a short hallway decorated with posters of girls in bikinis posing with shiny bikes, through a few more doors and corridors, and then far down a long stairwell. At the bottom of the stairs was pair of narrow doors which had been spray-painted silver, with the words "We don't call 911" scrawled across both of them, along with the image of a hand pointing a gun at the viewer.

Sitting on a stool next to the doors was a massive man, bigger even than Hogride. Hairy could also see a small video camera pointing down at them from above the doors. He felt nervous, but the man smiled at them and gave a thumbs-up to the camera, and then the doors swung open.

They went through the silver doors and into a large marble chamber. About a dozen beefy bikers wearing leather vests were sitting on high stools behind a long counter. They scribbled in large ledgers, weighing fat bags of marijuana on digital scales and examining chunks of hash through eyeglasses. Hogride and Hairy made for the counter.

"Mornin'," said Hogride to a free clerk. "We've come ta make a withdrawal from tha Potheads' family box."

"You have the key, man?"

"Got it 'ere somewhere," said Hogride, and he started emptying his pockets on the counter, scattering a handful of roaches over the ledger book. Hairy watched the biker at their right weighing a chunk of hash as big as his fist.

"Got it," said Hogride at last, holding up a tiny silver key.

The biker-clerk looked at it closely.

"That seems to be ok, man."

"Oy, I've also got a letter 'ere from Professor Duinthadope," said Hogride importantly. "It's about tha whatchamacallit in his box. I've got his key as well."

The biker read the letter carefully.

"All righty, man. Let's go back to the boxes. Goodwinch!"

Goodwinch was another biker. Once Hogride had crammed the roaches back into his pockets, he and Hairy followed Goodwinch towards another door leading out of the chamber.

Together, they entered a long narrow room with locked safety deposit boxes filling one wall, and a counter going along the other. The biker took Hairy's key and slipped it into a box, then matched it with a key from a huge set he pulled from his pocket. He opened the small door and slid out a long, narrow box, which

he placed upon the counter for Hairy.

While the biker took the key for Duinthadope's box from Hogride, Hairy opened his box and peered inside. It contained many small jars, filled with sparkling brown powders, each labeled with strange names and numbers. There was also several fat wads of strange-looking bills, each rolled up with an elastic band.

Hairy looked up to see Hogride opening the other box, taking out a leather folder and sliding it under his coat. Hairy longed to know what it was, but knew better than to ask.

Hogride walked over to Hairy as Goodwinch replaced Duinthadope's box back into its slot on the wall.

"Tha's a lot of Weedster cash there 'airy, we call it Hemsript. Tha big bills are called Elbows, tha smaller ones are Ozzys, and tha smallest are Gees. There are twenty-eight Gees to an Ozzy, and sixteen Ozzys to an Elbow. It's simple, really. One roll o' bills will do yeh for now I reckon. Leave tha rest fer later. Yeh should also grab yerself some of tha hash."

Hairy grabbed one roll of Hemsript then chose four jars at random. Goodwinch took back the box and returned it to its space on the wall, and then he escorted them from the room.

"Next thing we should get that plant of yours fixed up," said Hogride as they made their way back up to the street.

"Sure," said Hairy, blinking in the sunshine outside Route 81.

CHAPTER SIX

The House of Glass



Hairy and Hogride walked down the block and passed Airwell's Aromatherapy, where Hairy saw several boys his own age with their noses pressed against the window. Inside, Hairy could see many complicated machines on display, with assorted nozzles, hoses and plastic bags designed to collect and direct the potent steam captured from heated herbs. They were labeled with signs saying Volcano, Vapir, Aromed, MediVap, and more.

"Look," Hairy heard one of the boys say, "the new Nimbus Forty-Two Hundred – smoothest ever -"

Hogride stopped them at another store. Hairy looked up and read the sign that said "The Tomato Factory." The store had huge glass windows displaying lush, ripe tomato plants growing under blindingly strong lights.

The doors automatically slid open for them as they entered the store, and Hairy saw more displays of tomato-growing systems. The Tomato Factory was crowded with all sorts of equipment for growing plants, both indoors and out. Hairy saw water pumps, bags of soil and fertilizers, huge light bulbs hanging from racks, electrical ballasts, assorted sizes of fans, and a small dumpy woman wearing green, who was pulling off her gardening gloves as she approached them from behind the counter.

"Hello Hogride, how're things growing?" she said, greeting them both with a big smile.

"Good as always, Professor Sprout," replied the giant biker. "But we need some help with this 'ere seedling," he added, gesturing towards Hairy's plant.

"What have we got here?" she asked, taking Hairy's teacup from his hands. "Oh my, we'd better take you into the back room for a closer look." She hustled them both past complicated displays of trickle feed tube systems, nutrient film tables, ebb and flow hydro trays, aeroponic mister assemblies and turnkey home grow closets. They went through a swinging door marked "Employees only" and into the back room.

Sprout took a large magnifying glass from a table cluttered with all sorts of pots, mounds of soil, packets of seeds, and other gardening paraphernalia. She examined Headstash thoroughly and efficiently.

"Your plant has a nitrogen deficiency, some mild root fungus and a few spider mites," she said, taking a pinch of soil from the teacup, dropping it into a small vial of pink fluid, and examining the results. "But it's nothing we can't take care of. She needs more light though, a great deal more light. She looks like she's been growing in a dark closet."

Sprout expertly scooped the plant and its meager bit of dirt from out of the cracked teacup and into a larger pot, already half-filled with rich, moist soil. She packed some fresh earth in around the plant, then sprinkled on a variety of powders and poured in a beaker-full of murky brown water. She then sprayed the entire plant with three different misters, caressed the leaves for a moment, and handed it back to Hairy.

"It'll be fine now," she said. "Just don't let the soil dry out, and make sure it gets plenty of sunshine and fresh air."

"Gee thanks!" said Hairy. "I'll be sure to take good care of it!" He was thrilled to see Headstash looking so green and perky.

"Thanks Professor," said Hogride. "We've got ta get

a move on, we've still got ta buy tha lad more school supplies."

Next was the House of Glass. Inside this shop Hairy saw all sorts of beautiful things made from blown and melted glass. The whole store was stuffed full of exotic blown glass goblets, pendants, vases, bowls, paperweights and orbs, plus sculptures of birds, fish, animals and fruits, also chandeliers, sconces, even kaleidoscopes, all shimmering with intricately swirled colors and complex patterns of reflected light.

An old man was standing before them, his wide, pale eyes shining like the beads of glass in his shop.

"Good afternoon, Hairy Pothead," said the man, in a voice like grinding glass. "I thought I'd see you here soon."

The man moved closer to Hairy, and Hairy wished he would blink. His big eyes were a bit spooky.

"You have your father's hair and your mother's eyes I see," said the man. "It seems only yesterday that they were here, buying their first bongs. Your father got a color-changing Bubbler with fumed sidecar, and your mother took a pink mini Triple-Bubbler with donut mouthpiece. I remember every bong I've ever sold young man."

The man had come so close that he and Hairy were almost nose-to-nose. Hairy could see himself reflected in those glassy eyes.

"And that's where..."

The man touched the leaf-shaped scar on Hairy's forehead with his long, cold finger.

"Fascinating," he muttered, then shook his head and, to Hairy's relief, he spotted Hogride.

"Ruderalis Hogride. How good to see you again. Dichroic Chubbler with inverse swirl and an extra-deep bowl, wasn't it?"

"It was, yes sir, Mr. Olliboinger," replied Hogride, nodding happily.

"Good bong, that one. I suppose they confiscated it when you were expelled?" said Olliboinger, suddenly stern.

"Er – no," replied Hogride. "I keep it at home and I use it all tha time."

"Hmmm," said Olliboinger, giving Hogride a piercing look. "Well, let's go into the back room."

He escorted them into the rear section of the shop, through a door marked "Private." Hairy saw that the shelves in here were all filled with a wide variety of shimmering glass bongs, each one unique in style and design.

Olliboinger turned his attention to Hairy. "Well now Mr. Pothead, let's see." He pulled a tape measure from his pocket. "Which is your bong arm?"

"Er – well, I'm right-handed," said Hairy.

"Hold out your arm then, that's it." Olliboinger expertly measured Hairy from shoulder to wrist, then wrist to fingertip, thumb to pinkie, knee to nipple and chin to nose, plus across his lips, then around his bicep, wrist, neck and head. He wrote everything down in a small black notebook.

"Every Olliboinger bong is unique, hand-crafted by a devoted artisan," said Olliboinger, his long fingers trailing along a row of bongs. "We have dozens of talented glass-blowers on staff, working day and night to create these works of art." He suddenly stopped and grabbed one off the shelf, bringing it to Hairy. "Try this, it's an nine-inch Sherbulator with removable stem."

Hairy took the cold bong in his hands. He wasn't sure how to hold it properly, and before he could get a comfortable grip Olliboinger was whisking it away and replacing it with another, much bigger glass contraption.

"Try this seventeen-inch Saxophone Odyssey with a chubby double-knuckle grip."

Hairy looked at the strange glass object in his hands. It was beautiful and covered in swirling patterns, but he wasn't even sure which end he was supposed to suck on. Olliboinger quickly replaced it with a four-way donut Sherlock Bubbler, then a Ziggy Hammer with sidecar, followed by a candy cane Sidewinder Genie with left-handed shotgun.

Soon Hairy had gone through another dozen unique bongs, and Hogride was starting to fidget impatiently.

"airy, this could take a while, but we've got a schedule ta keep. So I'm gonna fetch yer robes an' books an' bus ticket, and I'll meet yeh back 'ere in a wee bit. Alright?"

"Sure, I guess so," said Hairy, feeling a bit nervous about being alone with Olliboinger, who was rooting around in another room for even more glassware.

As Hogride left, bumping into shelves and leaving glass jostling precariously in his wake, Olliboinger returned with another stack of boxes.

"You'll know the right one when you grip it," said Olliboinger, taking a tiny bong shaped like a toadstool from Hairy's hands and replacing it with a heavy glass structure with two separate bowls and four water chambers. It covered Hairy's lap and he could barely lift it.

"The person doesn't choose the bong," said Olliboinger, "it's the bong that chooses you."

Hairy went through another two-dozen glass bongs in rapid succession, and began worrying that he would never find one that suited him. Finally Olliboinger paused, looking at Hairy with his head tilted, lost in deep thought. Then he suddenly snapped his fingers and muttered, "Yes, why not?" He slipped into the storage room again, emerging with a beautiful piece of glass. "Double-Bubbler, eight inches, color-changing

dichroic glass, easy grip.”

He passed it to Hairy, and it felt warm and snug in the young Weedster's grip. Hairy's hand seemed to fit perfectly, his thumb rested naturally on the carb hole, and when he brought it to his mouth and took a dry draw, it felt smooth and clean and good. He instantly knew that this was the bong for him. It felt right.

“How much is it?” asked Hairy, suddenly worried that he wouldn't have enough Hemsript to afford the beautiful piece of glass.

“This is a quality piece,” said Olliboinger. “A very special item. It's been in my shop for years, many years.” He took the glasswork back from Hairy and held it up to the light. “The glassblower who made this item created another bong – just one other.”

Olliboinger picked up the box from the floor and started to carefully pack the bong back inside. “It is very curious indeed that you should be destined for this bong,” he said, “when its brother – why, the man who used its brother gave you that scar.”

Hairy swallowed. He didn't think he liked Mr. Olliboinger very much.

Olliboinger looked at Hairy and smiled grimly. “This is an expensive piece Mr. Pothead. I'm afraid I must charge you nine Ozzys to make it yours.”

Hairy pulled out his thick wad of cash and counted out the needed bills. He was happy to see that he had more than enough Hemsript to pay for a dozen bongs. He paid Mr. Olliboinger, took the box, picked up Headstash, and went back to the main part of the store to wait for Hogride.

There were two other boys waiting in the store to buy their bongs. Olliboinger gestured for one of them to enter the back room, and Hairy was left alone in the shop with the other boy.

“Hullo,” said the boy. He had a bored, drawling voice, blond hair, and a pale face with a pointed nose. “Hempwards too?”

“Yes,” said Hairy.

“My father's down the street buying my books,” said the boy arrogantly, “and my mother's next door getting gardening supplies. Next I'm going to drag them to the aromatherapy shop to look at vaporizers. I don't see why first-years can't have their own vaporizer. I think I'll bully daddy into getting me one and I'll smuggle it in somehow.”

Hairy didn't answer; he didn't know what to say.

“So, you took a long time back there,” drawled the boy. “What kind of bong did you get?”

“Uh, it's eight inches, and it has color changing glass,” answered Hairy.

“Oh. Play Qannabbi at all?”

“No,” said Hairy, wondering what Qannabbi was.

“I do – Daddy says it's a crime if I'm not picked to play for my house, and I must say I agree. Know which house you'll be in yet?”

“No,” said Hairy, feeling more stupid by the minute.

“Well, no one really knows until we get there, do they? But I know I'll be in Snytcherin. All our family has been. Imagine being in Puffintuff! I think I'd leave, wouldn't you?”

“Mmm,” said Hairy, wishing he knew what the boy was talking about.

“Your plant looks scrawny,” said the boy. Again, Hairy didn't answer.

“Where are your parents?” asked the boy.

“They're dead,” said Hairy quietly.

“Oh, sorry,” said the boy, not sounding sorry at all. “But they were our kind, weren't they?”

“They were Weedsters, if that's what you mean.”

“I really don't think they should let the other sort in, do you? They're just not the same; they've never been brought up to know our ways. Just imagine, some of



them have never even heard of ganja until they get the letter from Hempwards. I think they should keep it in the old Weedster families. These newbies are almost as bad as the Legalizers.”

“Legalizers?” asked Hairy.

“You know, they want everyone to have access to our special plant! They just can’t leave things alone. Some of us like the laws just the way they are, thank you very much. Besides, how could we make such a big profit if just anyone could grow weed?”

“I don’t think it’s really about the money...” began Hairy, but the boy interrupted him.

“Who’s that oaf?” he said, pointing at the window behind Hairy. Hairy turned and saw Hogride walking past the store, carrying a heavy bag in each hand.

“That’s Hogride,” answered Hairy.

“Oh yes, he’s a sort of servant at Hempwards, isn’t he?”

“He’s my friend,” answered Hairy coldly, walking to the door to greet the massive biker.

“You should watch out who you’re seen with!” called out the boy, as Hairy left the shop.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Magic Bus



“y ‘airy!” said Hogride, “yeh got yer bong now? I’ve got all yer books an’ robes.” He held up twin bags, both stuffed full. “But we gotta rush now, as tha bus is leavin’ right soon! Tha later buses was all booked up, so I had ta buy a ticket fer tha bus leavin’ at 4:20 Paris time. We’ve only got a few minutes, no time ta stop fer a hoot at tha Freaky Cauldron.”

“OK,” said Hairy, not fully understanding, and distracted by the boy’s harsh words still ringing in his ears.

They jogged down the street, back past Route 81, the Tomato Factory, the House of Glass, and the Freaky Cauldron. At the end of the street Hairy saw a large brightly-colored bus, with the logo “International Harvester” in wrought iron above the back license plate, which read FURTHUR 3.

“There’s a dozen different buses ‘airy,” said Hogride as they approached the garishly painted vehicle. “They’ll be headin’ to ‘empwards all afternoon an’

evenin’. It’s a long ride, so try an’ have a nap on tha way.”

“You’re not coming with me?” asked Hairy, suddenly worried.

“Nah, but I’ll be comin’ along later tonight. I’ll be sure ta see yeh at tha school soon.” He passed the bags to Hairy as they reached the open front doors of the bus. Hairy caught a glimpse of feet disappearing under the vehicle; perhaps a mechanic was finishing up his work.

Hairy looked up to see the driver smiling down at him. He had long, curly black hair peeking out from under his baseball cap, and a pair of headphones stretched tightly over the top. Hairy could hear heavy rock music pounding out from the earpieces. “Hey little dude, come on board!” shouted the driver. Hairy noticed a sticker on his shirt saying YOUR DRIVER: OTTO.

Peering inside, Hairy saw that the bus was already full of kids his age. Chattering boys and girls filled almost every seat, and sweet smoke filled the air. Hairy could hear the burbling of bong and scratching of lighters as the kids smoked weed, giggled and talked loudly amongst themselves. Hogride reached past him and handed Otto the ticket.

“Well, goodbye then Hogride,” said Hairy. “Thank you for everything.”

“Och, thanks be ter yeh too ‘airy!” said Hogride, clapping his hands onto Hairy’s thin shoulders. “This be a very special day! I am honored ta call yeh frien’!” He wiped his nose and stepped back. “‘ave a safe trip! I’ll see yeh again up at ‘empwards.”

Hairy smiled at Hogride, then turned and climbed aboard the Magic Bus.

There was only one seat left. It was near the back, next to a boy with red hair. The bus jerked forward as the driver put it in gear, and Hairy had to grab on as he made his way down the central aisle, nearly dropping Headstash and his bags as he went.

Hairy reached the empty seat and stuffed his bags into the overhead compartment, then sat down next to the red-headed boy, who was clutching a cracked glass bong in his hands. It was factory-made plain glass, not colored, and even though it was wrapped in duct tape to stop it from falling apart, the bong was slowly dripping water into the boy’s lap.

“Hullo,” said the boy. “I’m Gonall Weedly. You can call me Gon. What’s your name?”

“Uh, I’m Hairy Pothead,” replied Hairy. The bus suddenly went quiet as Hairy announced his name, and kids began whispering among themselves. Hairy heard his name being repeated with wonder. Gon’s mouth dropped open, then he swallowed and smiled at Hairy.

“For real... you’re the Hairy Pothead? Have you really

got – you know...”

He pointed at Hairy’s forehead.

Hairy pulled aside a lock of his dreads to show the pot-leaf scar. Gon stared.

“So that’s where Whats-his-face...?”

“Yes,” said Hairy, “but I can’t really remember it.”

They were interrupted by a slightly older boy with red hair like Gon’s, who leaned over the back of their seat and made horn signs with both hands while sticking out his tongue and wagging his head.

“Waaazzzzzup?” said the boy, exhaling a thick cloud of marijuana smoke over Hairy and Gon. Then an identical boy joined him, leaning over the back of the chair and exhaling a second cloud of white smoke as he repeated the catchphrase. “Waaazzzzzup?”

“Say hi to my brothers,” said Gon, “Fried and Gage. They’re twins, in case you hadn’t noticed. And they’re annoying, in case you hadn’t noticed that either.”

“Hairrrrrrrrry Pothead!” said the twins in unison, and then they jumped back down into their seats and began packing their bongs with more buds.

“It’s made almost entirely of hemp, you know.”

Hairy turned to see a girl sitting in the seat across the aisle from him. She had curly, chestnut-brown hair and sparkling hazel eyes. She had a huge book open on her lap and was reading from it to Hairy and anyone else within earshot.

“This bus is a replica of the famous Merry Pranksters bus that toured America during the 1960’s,” she continued, consulting her book. “Except that virtually everything in this bus is made of hemp. The frame is made of molded hemp plastics, biodegradable of course. Even the engine runs on hemp methanol biofuel.”

Hairy wasn’t sure what this girl was talking about. “Cool,” he said, hoping that was an appropriate reply.

“My name’s Herbonme,” she said. “Herbonme Stranger.”

“I’m...” began Hairy, before she cut him off.

“Yeah, I know. *The Hairy Pothead*. I read about you in *High Times* magazine.”

Hairy didn’t know what to say about that, but luckily Herbonme kept on talking.

“Did you know this bus is one of twelve which were specially built for use by Hempwards? They get used for all kinds of things, but mostly for bringing students to the Hempwards secret location.”

“Secret location?” asked Hairy.

“Yeah, Hempwards is hidden at a secret place, no one knows exactly where it is. Well, of course some people know, but they’re all sworn to secrecy.”

As she spoke, the bus windows all began to slowly darken, and in a moment they were completely black. Hairy glanced around as the interior lights came on.

Only a small patch of the front window remained clear, so that Otto could see where he was driving.

“What’s going on?” asked Hairy.

“It’s like I was just telling you,” replied Herbonme. “Hempwards is at a hidden location. Even the students don’t get to know exactly where it is. Those windows will remain dark for the next eight hours.”

“Eight hours?” asked Hairy. Now he knew why Hogride had recommended a nap.

“I wish we had more weed to smoke,” said Herbonme, closing her book and setting a small jar and a pack of King-Sized Rizla pure hemp rolling papers onto the cover. She opened the jar and shook out a few marijuana buds, which she began crumbling between her fingers. “It seems like everybody has been toking up so much already, we’ll all be dry before we’re even halfway there.”

“I’m already out!” added Gon sadly, wiping bong water off his pant leg.

“I think I’ve got something,” said Hairy, rummaging into his pockets and pulling out one of the jars he had retrieved from his father’s safety deposit box. “I hope this is alright,” he added, setting it onto Herbonme’s book.

Her eyes widened, and she stopped in the middle of licking her joint, setting it down half-sealed. She picked up the jar and read the label aloud.

“Super Silver Haze x Hindu Kush. 112 microns. 4 stars. Soaring cerebral head high and tingling body rush. Good for intimate conversation and intense relaxation.”

She held up the jar against the light, and Hairy could see the golden-brown crystals glinting within. “Hairy,” she said, “this stuff looks amazing! Do you have something to smoke it in?”

Hairy opened the box from Olliboingers and pulled out his Double-Bubbler. It felt good in his grip.

“That is beautiful,” cooed Gon, leering at Hairy’s shimmering new glassware. “Here, I’ve got some water for it.” He reached into his backpack and pulled out a small bottle, unscrewed the lid and carefully poured some water into Hairy’s bong.

When they were done, Herbonme passed Hairy the thick joint she had rolled with the last of her weed, and then she took a tiny pinch of Hairy’s bubble hash and dropped it into the bowl. “That’s a joint of Blueberry, by the way.”

Hairy took a hit off the joint. He was astounded at how much it did taste just like fresh blueberries. He felt the familiar rush of awareness as the smoke filled his lungs and cannabinoids began saturating his bloodstream. He passed it to Gon, then exhaled as he saw Herbonme holding a lit match over the bowl which con-

tained the pinch of pure hash crystals.

"The first one's for you Hairy," she said, and Hairy put his lips against the pipe's mouth and began a slow and steady inhalation. He saw the hash begin to bubble as the flame approached it, forming a clear dome of liquefied goo and then melting away into pure smoke and vapors.

The water purified the smoke as it was broken into tiny bubbles and passed first through one chamber, then again through water and into the second. Hairy could feel the dense smoke expanding as it entered his mouth, flowed down his throat and deeply into his lungs. The smoke had a complex taste of berries and pine, with overtones of sweet molasses. Hairy thought that it was the most smooth and delicious thing he had ever tasted in his entire life.

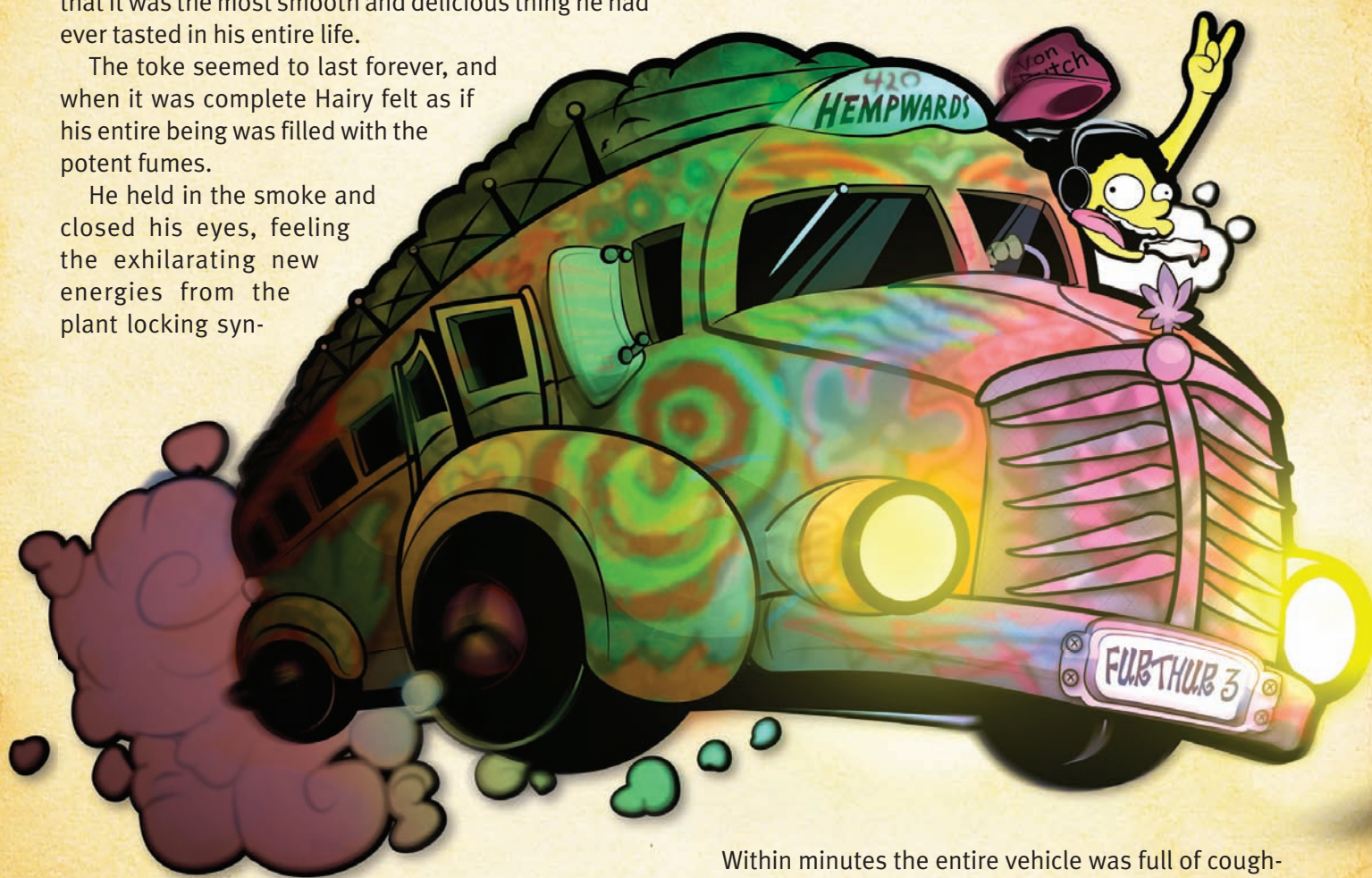
The toké seemed to last forever, and when it was complete Hairy felt as if his entire being was filled with the potent fumes.

He held in the smoke and closed his eyes, feeling the exhilarating new energies from the plant locking syn-

pushing out the other smoke that was clouding the rest of the bus. Hairy's lungs ached just slightly, and he suppressed the slight urge to cough.

"Do you mind if we have a toké too?" asked Herbonme, and Hairy nodded dumbly, his mind on a thousand other things. Herbonme took out another pinch and put it into the bowl of Gon's cracked, duct-taped bong. Gon took a deep hit, then began coughing and spluttering from the dense smoke.

Gon's twin brothers reached over with their nearly identical bongs and Herbonme filled each of their bowls with a pinch of Hairy's hash, and soon everyone on the bus was sticking out their bongs and pipes and getting a sample of this potent product.



ergistically into every part of his mind and body. He could feel every single aspect of himself in a way he never had before, as if his awareness had expanded from its usual narrow focus and now encompassed a much greater spectrum of thoughts, feelings and ideas. He enjoyed these new sensations; they made him feel warm and happy.

Finally, Hairy opened his eyes and began to release the smoke from his lungs. It poured out of his nose and mouth in a thick stream, filling the air around him and

Within minutes the entire vehicle was full of coughing, watery-eyed students, but their coughs soon dissolved into boisterous conversation and laughter. Hairy heard some kids in the front of the bus chanting "Sha-key! Sha-key! Sha-key!" as a skinny, nervous-looking boy knelt down sheepishly to wipe up a puddle of his spilled bong water.

Suffused with cannabis, Hairy suddenly found himself telling Herbonme and Gon every detail about his life, his restricted existence with the Straitley's, and his unpleasant cousin, Studly.

Gon was especially interested in Hairy's story, as he

came from a large family of Weedsters, and he didn't really know anything about what it was like to be a Square. Gon was the second youngest of seven children; this was his first year at Hempwards, and the second for his twin brothers.

Herbonme came from a mostly Square family. Although her parents had been Weedsters in their younger days, they had not pursued the herbal arts, and had eventually given it up altogether, as they grew older. But they were happy to accept Herbonme's supreme interest in all things cannabis, and had allowed her to attend Hempwards.

They talked for what seemed like hours, and eventually Hairy found himself with his eyes closed, drifting into sleep. He could feel the vibration of the bus' engine, but he still felt as if he was floating on a bed of clouds. Somewhere inside he knew he should be nervous about what lay ahead, but right now, at this moment, he was as relaxed and contented as he could possibly be.

Even though he had never been to Hempwards, Hairy felt as if the Magic Bus was taking him home.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Cannabis Castle



irtually the entire place is made out of hemp!"

Hairy woke up from a pleasant dream, heard Herbonme's voice and he wondered who she was telling her facts about the bus to now. He opened his eyes a crack and saw that Gon had switched seats and was now sitting next to Herbonme. She was reading to him from her big book.

"Look who's decided to join us!" said Gon, seeing Hairy awaken and smiling in his direction.

"Uh, hi," said Hairy, sitting up. He pushed his dreads out of his eyes and straightened his glasses on his face. He didn't know how long he had been asleep.

"Herbonme's just reading to me about Hempwards," said Gon. "Go on..."

"Well," said Herbonme, "I was just saying that Hempwards School lies within the Cannabis Castle, which is made almost entirely from hemp." She looked back into the book to find her place. "The location of the Castle, and even its very existence, is one of the most carefully guarded secrets within the Weedster community. However, some things are known. It's con-

structed almost entirely out of a hemp product called Isochanvre, which is similar to Square cement, but more flexible and only one-ninth the weight. It's so easy to make, just hemp hurds mixed with lime, and it actually petrifies into a mineral state. The Cannabis Castle has stood for many centuries."

The bus came to a sudden halt, jerking the book from Herbonme's hands and sliding Hairy halfway out of his chair before he caught himself. Hairy looked down and saw that Headstash had been knocked over, so he righted the pot and scooped the spilled dirt back inside.

"We're here little dudes!" called out Otto, opening the front doors. "Grab your stuff and get going!"

They gathered up their bags and trooped off of the bus. Hairy wasn't sure how much time had passed, but it was dark out, with a waxing crescent moon hidden behind clouds hanging high in the sky.

A tall, stern woman in emerald-green robes stood there to greet them. Her black hair was wrapped in a tight bun, and she wore thick-framed glasses marked with spots. She held a powerful flashlight in her hand, and waited as the students gathered in front of her.

"Thank you Otto," she said to the driver, and then turned to the students. "I am Professor McGanjagal. Everyone ready? Right then, let's go."

Slipping and stumbling, they followed the professor down a steep, narrow path. Tall, ominous-looking trees loomed over them on both sides. Nobody spoke much. Then there was a loud "Ooooh!"

The path had opened onto an expansive clearing with a steep hill at the centre. Perched upon the hill was a great castle, with many turrets and towers jutting up from the shadows. The wind suddenly shifted and blew back the clouds, freeing the moonlight to reflect upon the students from the castle's many windows. Dozens of flags and banners fluttered up on the breeze, displaying the same seven pointed, serrated leaf that Hairy wore as a scar. Some of the castle towers looked like giant bongos, with smoke flowing out from chimneys shaped like lit bowls of cannabis.

McGanjagal strode purposefully along a broad flagstone path, leading them towards the imposing structure. They reached a drawbridge, and Hairy saw the moon glinting up at him from the water as they crossed over. The main door was decorated with a man's face emerging from a mass of seven-pointed leaves. The face had its tongue sticking far out, wrapped around a large brass ring. The professor grabbed the ring and banged it loudly upon the door three times.

The door swung open at once, and a woman in white greeted them. Her cottony hair was layered high above her head into an ascending pouf. She wore a white embroidered crinoline skirt and many layers of lace. All

of her garments were woven with myriad intricate patterns of stylized cannabis leaves, buds and seeds.

“Good evening Professor McGanjagal,” said the woman, smiling warmly and motioning them to come through the door.

“Good evening Professor LaChanvrette,” replied McGanjagal, leading the students into a large entry chamber. The walls were made of big blocks that looked like stone, but felt a little softer and warmer to Hairy’s touch. They were hung with hundreds of photographs and painted portraits depicting the most successful of Hempwards graduates. Hairy saw names like Jack Herer, Howard Marks, Thomas Forçade and Marc Emery.

Professor McGanjagal stood before the students and clapped her hands twice to get their attention before she spoke.

“Welcome to Hempwards! I hope your journey here was as pleasant as possible. You are beginning an even greater journey now, one that will change your lives and expose you to a whole new world and a different way of being. But to become a student here, you must first go through a special ceremony in the Great Hall, where you will be sorted into your houses.

“Hempwards School was founded long, long ago,” she continued, “by four great Weedsters: Pakinbowles Puffintuff, Jahmon Rastalaw, Getriche Growindor, and Selzimout Snytcherin. The founders built the school together, far from prying Square eyes. It was an age much like this one, when the common people feared marijuana and Weedsters suffered much persecution.

“There are four houses within Hempwards, each named after one of these great founders, and each student is assigned to one of them when they arrive. You will each draw a slip of paper from the Picking Pot, then announce the name of the house you will attend.

“While you are here, you will have classes with the rest of your house, you will sleep in your house dormitory, you will toke in your house common room. Your successes at Hempwards will reflect well upon your house, and I hope each of you will be a credit to whichever house you join.”

She led them through a large set of doors and into a massive main hall. The room was full of smoke, with giant hashish incense cones smoldering along the walls and behind the head table. The walls were painted with fields of marijuana, so highly realistic that for a brief

moment Hairy thought that they were somehow windows onto the outdoors.

Other students were already lined up into a long row, waiting for their turn at the Picking Pot. Hairy’s bus mates all took their places in the line. At the front of the row, Hairy saw a brown-haired girl stepping forward to reach into a small cauldron.

A professor stood over the cauldron, holding a clipboard in one hand and a long quill in the other. “O’Yello, Melanie!” he announced, checking her name off of the list.

“I prefer to be called Mel,” said the girl, pulling out a piece of paper. She read it, then quietly said “Growindor.”

A group of students broke away from the huddle of youths waiting past the cauldron. They clapped and shook Mel’s hand, greeting her into her new house, and then an escort took her through another set of doors and deeper into the castle.

The next student who came forward was large and hulking, with small eyes embedded into his thick head. “Raveel, Finke!”

announced the professor, as the boy reached into the Picking Pot and pulled out his slip of paper.

The boy squinted, held the paper close to his sallown-skinned face, and muttered to himself for a moment, sounding out the word.

“Snee... Snit... itch... itcher...”

“Snytcherin!” cheered some of the greeters, and another equally thick and dull-looking boy came forward to grasp Finke’s hand, followed by a few other creepy Snytcherins. Finke stayed to watch the other students making their picks.

The next few students seemed to go quickly. “Carrot, Camberwell!” joined Puffintuff, along with “Spark, Roland!”. “Bagbottoms, Shakey!” joined Growindor, but not until he had knocked over the Picking Pot while drawing his name.

“Tokersson, Heddy!” joined Puffintuff. “Bobo, Shanti!” and “Lambsbread, Natty!” both joined Rastalaw. “Squeale, Will!” joined Snytcherin, along with “Dent, Biggerow!” and “Terrus, Trey!”.

Herbonme and Gon were in front of Hairy, and both gleefully called out “Growindor!” when they drew their slips of paper.

Finally it was Hairy’s turn. He stepped forward nervously, and the teacher called out his name as he reached his hand into the pot. A hush fell over the



room, and Hairy pulled out a slip of paper. It had only one word written upon it: SNYTCHERIN.

Hairy swallowed. Not Snytcherin! He didn't want to join that unsavory lot. His mouth felt very dry. He looked over at the Snytcherin crew, and he did not feel like he belonged there. He thought of the obnoxious boy at Olliboinger's, who was sure he would be joining Snytcherin. He looked at the youths standing in the other houses, all watching him eagerly. He saw Gon and Herbonme standing together in the Growindor group, smiling at him warmly.

Hairy tried to speak but no sound came out. His heart was beating very fast. He swallowed dryly, and then managed to croak out a single word.

"Gr... Growindor."

He quickly dropped the slip of paper back into the pot and jogged over to his new housemates. Gon and Herbonme were smiling and clapping for him. A tall boy with straight white teeth and golden-blond hair stepped forward to shake his hand. Hairy felt his knuckles grinding under the boy's firm grip.

"Olfyber Hurd, Hairy. Growindor House Leader. Glad to have you on board!"

Hairy smiled back weakly at Olfyber. He felt vaguely guilty about his deception, but he was glad to be with his friends and not with the Snytcherin crew. A smiling girl introduced herself as Tootie Piper, and she led Hairy, Gon and Herbonme out of the Great Hall and through dozens of winding passages. As they walked, she told them that they should try to have a bit of a sleep, as in a few more hours it would be morning, and they needed to be out of bed and back in the Great Hall for the opening day Waykenbake Ceremony.

Finally they went up a long spiral staircase and entered the Growindor common room, a cozy, round chamber full of plush armchairs and elegant stand-up ashtrays. Then through more doors and into the common dormitory, where a series of luxurious four-poster beds awaited them, hung with hemp velvet curtains colored in deep gold.

Hairy, Gon and Herbonme each chose their beds and put away their belongings. Some Growindor students were already sleeping, others were chatting in small groups. Tootie left them to get settled in.

Herbonme and Gon sat on Hairy's bed and smiled at him, holding their bongs in their hands. Gon's bong water was still slowly seeping through the layers of duct tape.

"Can we have a little more of that fabulous bubble hash, Hairy?" asked Herbonme sweetly. "It is amazing stuff!"

Hairy picked up the jar of hash that he had shared with everyone on the bus. It looked like hardly any had

been used. He was amazed that just the little bit that was missing had been enough to get the whole bus incredibly stoned!

He put it back and picked up the other jar. The label said "Moroccan Hashplant x Candycane Indica. 45 microns. 4.5 stars. Heavy body stone and muscle relaxant. Good for insomnia and pain relief."

Hairy opened the jar and smelled the golden powder within. It had a scent like spearmint and pink bubblegum. It was a finer powder than the other hash, more bronze than brown, and it shimmered like ground glass. Hairy placed a tiny pinch into each of their bongs, and a third tiny pinch into his own.

Hairy smiled and held up his bong like a wineglass. "I propose a toast," he said boldly. "A toast to new friends, to marijuana, to Hempwards, and to Weedsters everywhere!"

"I'll toke to that!" added Gon. They clinked their bongs together and sparked their lighters in unison, sucking in the delicious smoke from the highly potent hash.

Herbonme and Gon both began to cough as they staggered back to their own beds. Hairy simply held in his toke and smiled happily.

"Thanks Hairy!" said Herbonme, still gasping as she closed the curtains around her bed. "I am fabulously baked and also exhausted. See you in the morning!"

"Me too Hairy," choked out Gon. "Have a great sleep! See you in a few hours."

Hairy lay back, closed his eyes, and let the smoke flow slowly from his nose and mouth. He felt the cannabinoids saturating his bloodstream yet again, his body becoming heavy and lethargic as his muscles relaxed. He could barely believe that this was all real.

He had spent fifteen years living in a closet, unaware of his true nature, blinded even to the existence of this special, magical plant. And now he was in an amazing Cannabis Castle, with new friends, good friends, who actually enjoyed his company! In the morning he would begin classes, begin learning more of the secrets of this plant and the hidden culture that was part of his true heritage.

Hairy's thoughts swirled down into sleep, and soon he was deep into a dream. He saw himself as a tiny figure, trapped within the Picking Pot, clambering among giant slips of paper all marked with the word "Snytcherin" printed in blood-red ink. Then the rude blond haired boy reached into the pot and grabbed Hairy in his giant fist, pulling him out of the pot while saying "You're one of us now, Hairy Pothead! You're one of us!"

Hairy rolled over and fell into a deeper sleep. When he woke in the morning he didn't remember the dream at all.



CHAPTER NINE

The Waykenbake



airy awoke to the sound of Gon's voice calling to him urgently.

"Hairy, wake up! We've got to get going!"

Hairy reached out and pulled back the gold velvet curtain, letting the pink pre-dawn light come through. He saw other students, dressed in their hempen robes and heading out the door. Gon and Herbonme were also already wearing their school uniforms.

"Finally! You sure are a heavy sleeper!" said Gon. "I've been calling you for ages!"

Hairy was still wearing the same clothes as yesterday, but he pulled the curtains shut and changed quickly into the pure hemp outfit Hogride had bought for him. It was a bit oversized, so Hairy had to roll up the sleeves and pant legs.

They hurried downstairs and back to the Great Hall, where they saw that five long tables had been set out. One was allocated for each Hempwards house, and they were being rapidly filled by students. The fifth table was offset against the rest, and was where the professors and school workers were sitting on tall, plush, golden-green chairs with high, elaborately carved backs.

Hairy saw Hogride seated at an especially large chair second from the end. He was clearly dressed in his best: a shiny black leather jacket and a wide tie decorated with flaming skulls. Aside from a few wayward tufts, his wild hair was thickly greased and lay flat against his head. Hogride caught Hairy's eye, giving him a wink and a broad smile.

Olfyber waved Hairy, Gon and Herbonme over, and they came to join him where he was sitting with their other housemates. The long table was huge and set with a single long hempen cloth dyed in the color of shimmering Growindor gold. Every few feet along each table there was a large, ornate silver bowl overflowing with beautiful marijuana buds.

One of the professors stood and raised his hands for silence. He was tall and thin, with long silver hair and beard. Half-moon mirrored glasses sparkled on the end of his lengthy nose.

"Welcome!" he said. "Welcome all to a new season at Hempwards! I am Master Head Alwaze Duinthadope." Some of the students clapped, and a few whistled.

"Before we begin the Waykenbake, I'd like to say a few words of the utmost importance..."

With one smooth motion Duinthadope suddenly

swung an ornate five-foot glass tube bong up onto the table, then swept a massive bud from out of a silver tray in front of him and stuffed it smoothly into the bowl. With one hand he flicked a match and shot flame over the herb, and with the other he steadied the bong as he sucked the thick smoke all the way into the deepest core of his being. The only sound in the Great Hall was the gurgling and burbling of his lengthy bong as he took his mighty toke.

Finally, after the strength of his inhalation had reduced the massive bud entirely into ashes, Duinthadope took his mouth off of the bong and surveyed the assembled students. He paused majestically; thin wisps of smoke trailing from his nose, then expelled vast bursting clouds as he cried, "It's 4:20 Hempwards time! Let the Waykenbake begin!"

All the students began grabbing handfuls of the buds from the silver trays and preparing them for smoking. Some crumbled the herb and began rolling it into joints, others stuffed buds into the bowls of their bongs and pipes. Hairy looked around and saw the rude boy from Olliboingers was sitting at the black-draped Snytcherin table. Some of his fellow Snytcherins were gathered around him, holding black-tipped knives in their hands while he prepared to ignite a small blowtorch between his knees.

At that moment the boy glanced over and caught Hairy's eye. He sneered before Hairy could look away.

Gon and Herbonme were both passing joints to Hairy at the same time, so he held one in each hand and toked from both simultaneously, then crossed his arms and passed each of the jays over to the other friend.

"While we enjoy the Waykenbake," continued Duinthadope, "let me introduce you to the professors who will be instructing you this season."

Duinthadope gestured towards an elderly, vile-looking man at the far right of the Head Table. What little hair remained upon his head was matted with a permanent sweat, he had a long scar upon his left cheek, and his nose seemed to have been screwed too tightly to his face.

"This fine gentleman is Agros Roach, the Caretaker of this fantastic Cannabis Castle where Hempwards School makes its home. He knows the secret passages in this school better than anyone, so don't be surprised when he catches any one of you that tries to sneak around into places where you ought not to be!"

Roach leered menacingly, showing his sharp, yellow teeth.

Next was Ruderalis Hogride, the Grounds Keeper, whom Duinthadope told them was also responsible for most of the outdoor crops at Hempwards. Hogride gave them all an enthusiastic wave.

"Professor Moruvva McGanjagal will be instructing you in Toker Etiquette and Bong Maintenance," continued Duinthadope, as McGanjagal gave a curt nod. "She is the Deputy Mistress Head of Hempwards, and also the Head of Growindor House."

Next to Duinthadope on his left side was a man wearing black, with greasy black hair flopped over his wide forehead. He had a hooked nose, pallid skin, and a sour look on his face.

"This is Professor Vacuous Vape," continued Duinthadope. "He will be instructing you in the sublime science of Extractions. He is also the Head of Snytcherin House." Vape smiled tersely and glared at the students. For a moment, Hairy felt like Vape was staring specifically at him alone, and he swallowed nervously and looked away.

Next to Vape was Kultivar Sprout, whom Duinthadope introduced as the Gardening teacher. She was still dressed all in green, just like when Hairy had first met her at the Tomato Factory.

After Sprout came Professor Soma Poultrice. "Poultrice has come to Hempwards all the way from his hometown of Varanasi, India," said Duinthadope. Poultrice was tall, thin, and wore a brightly embroidered turban of red and gold, decorated with small strings of pearls. "He will be teaching us the important arts around the medicinal use of marijuana."

Hairy missed some of what Duinthadope had to say next, because Shakey suddenly tipped over his chair and crashed loudly to the ground. He rose and dusted himself off, picking up his chair and turning red as some other students hooted and a few flicked roaches at him.

"Professor Highly Splifpassie is spending his first season at Hempwards," continued Duinthadope, introducing another teacher. Splifpassie wore a woven tam with thick black dreads sticking out from beneath it. His skin was also black, with a slightly greasy sheen. He wore heavy sunglasses as dark as his skin, and was wearing a brown robe. He gave a forced smile, gritting his teeth as if he was in pain. "He is our new Professor of Defense Against the Drug Cops, and the new head of Rastalaw House. We welcome him to Hempwards!"

Duinthadope gestured to the next teacher and introduced her as Mademoiselle Retteswathe LaChanvrette, Professor of Hempology. She was dressed in a different but similar outfit from when she had opened the castle door for Hairy's busload the night before, and her white hair was shaped into an even taller and more complex spire above her head. She waved a lace handkerchief and smiled at the students.

The Professor of Cannatheism was next, a short, wiry Asian man whom Duinthadope introduced as Taima

Kiseru, the Head of Puffintuff House. He had tightly cropped short black hair and a very thin mustache, and wore silky red robes embroidered with a pattern of dragons. He was puffing slowly from a long, thin pipe with a tiny bowl. "Cannatheism is the study of the religious and spiritual uses of cannabis through history," explained Duinthadope, but then Hairy missed the rest of the introductions as he was distracted again, this time by a familiar, sneering voice from behind him.

"Well, so it's you who is the great Hairy Pothead."

Hairy turned and saw that the obnoxious boy was standing there, holding the still lit blowtorch in his hands, with a hulking Snytcherin flanking him on each side like bodyguards.

"You were rude not to introduce yourself the last time we met," continued the boy, looking down at Hairy and clicking off the torch. "Let me take this opportunity to correct your antisocial behavior. I already know who you are now. My name is Narco Badboy." He gestured at his two goons; Hairy saw that each of them was still holding a pair of sharp, black-tipped knives. "This is Finke, and this is Teller."

Herbonme smirked and blew a smoke ring at the trio, while Gon visibly suppressed a laugh.

"Something funny, Gonner?" snapped Narco, wheeling to face Gon. "Are you sure you can even afford a sense of humor? I heard your bong drips even more than your mom does after squeezing out all your filthy brood."

Gon immediately started to rise in anger, but Herbonme grabbed his shoulder and forced him to sit back down. Instead Olfyber stood up and walked over to the Snytcherins sternly.

"Back off little first-years," said the Growindor House Captain, locking eyes with Narco while putting a hand onto the chests of both Finke and Teller. "Get back to your own table."

"Sure thing Hurd," said Narco, taking a few steps backwards. "You don't need to herd us, we heard you, Hurd, and...we heard you." They slouched back to their own table, Narco's goons chuckling as he continued to mock Olfyber's last name. "Hurd hurd hurd, hurd is the word..."

"You've got to watch out for those Snytcherin," said Olfyber, putting his hand on Hairy's shoulder and passing him yet another bulging joint. "We compete with all the houses, but with the other two it's usually a friendly competition. Those Snytcherin will play dirty. Those knives they love to toké with can also be used to stab people, usually in the back!" He tapped his finger against the side of his skull. "Don't let them mess with your head!"

Just then, students began applauding as Duinthadope

finished introducing the professors and breakfast food began to appear. Servers carrying huge trays began streaming into the hall, laying out fresh fruit, pancakes, scrambled eggs, porridge, hash browns, sausages, muffins, pastries and toast, as well as assorted cheeses, plus jams, jellies, syrups, and plates and cutlery for students to use.

"It's virtually all made from hemp!" said Herbonme, repeating the mantra that Hairy had already heard twice before. "Most of this food is made with hemp."

This Hairy simply could not believe. "How can this be made from hemp?" he asked, shoveling food onto his plate. "These are scrambled eggs, not scrambled hemp!"

Herbonme giggled.

"The baked goods all contain hemp flour, the sauces and jams have hemp oil and hemp hearts," explained Herbonme. "And those 'scrambled eggs' are really tofu, hemp protein powder and spices!"

"Is this sausage from a pig that only ate hemp?" asked Hairy, waving a piece on his fork.

"The only pig at this table is you," replied Herbonme, grinning. "There's only texturized hemp protein and other yummy vegetarian stuff in there. The cheeses are all made with hemp milk too."

"Really?" asked Hairy, looking at his sausage in bewilderment. "Are the fruits made of hemp?"

"No," replied Herbonme. "Don't be silly, that's just fruit. How could you make fruit from hemp?"

"I dunno," replied Hairy, eating a big slice of peach. "It just seemed like a good question."

"Well, there is a little hemp oil drizzled on top," chuckled Herbonme.

Soon the meal was finished and the plates began to be cleared away. Hairy's belly was fuller than it had ever been. He felt satisfied and happy. He looked around the Great Hall, once again admiring the beauty and realism of the cannabis fields painted onto the walls.

Hairy watched how the doors into the main kitchen seemed to vanish into the painting when they were closed. They swung open again, and for the briefest moment Hairy saw a little man staring straight at him through the press of servers carrying tall stacks of plates and bowls. Hairy instantly recognized him as Dooby, the strange little man who had appeared in his bedroom closet and warned him against coming to Hempwards.

The door swung shut, and when it reopened Dooby was gone.

CHAPTER TEN

The Prisoner of Vatican



It took Hairy and the other new students a few days to get the hang of things, and even just finding their way between various classrooms was a complex chore. Their schedule was filled with lectures, assigned readings, practical work, mealtimes and study sessions. Hairy sometimes wondered if they would ever get a chance to just kick back and relax again.

In Hempology they began learning all about hemp and what Professor LaChanvrette called "The Three F's: Food, Fuel and Fiber." Hairy was amazed at all the incredible things you could make from hemp, and it was fun to see what complicated aristocratic outfit LaChanvrette would be wearing next. But he still found himself daydreaming while listening to lectures on hemp stalk decorticators, or calculating total fuel production per hectare when harvesting a single hemp crop for both seed oil and biomass.

Professor Poultrice began his first lesson on Medicinal Studies with an overview of the broad healing and therapeutic powers of the plant. "In my birthplace of India, ayurvedic physicians have used cannabis to treat medical problems for many thousands of years," he began, pausing to take a sip from the frothy green drink in front of him. "Ancient texts from my homeland such as the *Tajni Guntu* and the *Rajbulubha* list cannabis as a treatment for dozens of conditions, including expelling flatulence and increasing eloquence. I hope you'll be able to keep those two clear in your minds." Poultrice smiled as the students chuckled.

"Cannabis has more medicinal applications than any other plant," continued the professor. "It is useful in the treatment of nausea and anorexia, as well as neurological conditions such as epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, and spasms. It can alleviate conditions such as migraine, arthritis, and spinal and skeletal disorders. As a bronchodilator, cannabis is beneficial for asthma, and it also reduces intraocular pressure which makes it useful in treating glaucoma.

"The list of ailments which have been successfully treated with cannabis and cannabis extracts also



includes rheumatism, gastritis, gonorrhea, herpes, bronchitis, spleen disorders, diabetes, anemia, menstrual pain, tuberculosis, gout, constipation, malaria, and even leprosy,” concluded Poulitice, glancing at Hairy meaningfully as he read the last item on the list.

They had all been looking forward to their classes in Defense Against the Drug Cops, but all they seemed to do was learn about hiding places. Professor Splifpassie started with explaining how to make hollowed-out books, secret pockets, false lampshades and other hidden compartments, and promised he would move on to more advanced techniques such as smell-proofing, camouflaging, diversionary tactics, and hiding all sorts of things on or even inside your own body.

The problem was, Professor Splifpassie was always forgetting where he had hidden things. They spent a lot of time every class trying to find random objects sequestered around the classroom, while Splifpassie mopped the sweat from his greasy dark skin, unsure of where to look next. Also, Splifpassie always wore dark sunglasses, so you could never tell exactly where he was looking, and he had an odd accent, which made him sometimes difficult to understand.

One thing, which Splifpassie never misplaced, was his orange gourd, which he carried everywhere he went. He refused any joints or pipes passed his way, insisting on smoking only his own special “Superior Rasta Blend” variety, which he claimed was far more potent than any other type of cannabis.

Hairy’s favorite academic class was Cannatheism, where Professor Kiseru would sit cross-legged on his desk at the front of the classroom, his long silky red robes hanging down around him.

Kiseru would speak slowly and clearly, delivering each lecture while inscrutably puffing small chunks of hash from the tiny brass bowl on the end of his thin bamboo pipe. Each lecture was followed by a class discussion. Within the first few weeks of class they had already covered thousands of years of cannabis history, and Hairy found it fascinating.

In the very first lecture, Kiseru had outlined how cannabis and other mind-expanding plants had acted as catalysts and accelerators for humanity’s transition into consciousness and self-reflection. Kiseru explained how cannabis had acted as a special plant ally to the development of all human civilization, because of its unique properties as single source of food, fiber, medicine and enlightenment.

However, lessons soon became heavily focused on cannabis in the religion and culture of Japan. One lesson was entirely about the extensive use of hemp ropes for sacred and practical purposes during Japan’s Neolithic Jomon period. Kiseru also propounded endlessly on his

theories that cannabis was native to Japan, although he admitted that most scholars believed that cannabis seeds were brought to Japan from China, via Korean traders, sometime around 4,200 BC.

Some of the students had giggled when Kiseru had explained how, in those ancient times, wandering Japanese pilgrims would leave offerings of cannabis leaves and rice to pathside fertility statues, which were usually shaped like giant erect penises.

All the classes were tough, but Extractions was the worst. On the very first day, Hairy became convinced that Professor Vape detested him, for reasons he didn’t understand.

Extractions took place down in one of the deepest dungeons. It was cold and Vape kept the lights low, so as not to disturb his many solvents and concoctions in progress. The walls were lined with innumerable jars, bottles, vials and boxes, each containing mysterious liquids, powders, herbs and gels. It was one of the two classes that Growindor and Snytcherin houses took together, which made things immeasurably worse.

Vape began by taking attendance, and he paused at Hairy’s name.

“Ah, yes,” he said softly, “Hairy Pothead, our new – celebrity.”

Narco and his friends Finke and Teller sniggered. Vape finished calling out names, then rose from behind his desk to address the class.

“You are here to study the exacting art and subtle science of extractions,” he began, speaking quietly and precisely. “I doubt many of you truly appreciate or even understand the elegant beauty of the seventy-three micron screen, the delicate power of the perfectly distilled tincture, or the supreme stickiness of the pure golden oil...”

Vape surveyed the class disdainfully. “I can teach you to bottle dreams, to turn trash into the finest hash, to refine and purify both your harvest and your mind! You could become true alchemists – if you aren’t as big a bunch of dimwits as I normally have to teach!”

There was silence. Gon glanced at Hairy and raised his eyebrows.

“Pothead!” said Vape suddenly. “Where are the psychoactive and medicinal resins formed on the cannabis plant?”

Psycho-what? Hairy glanced at Gon, who looked as confused as he was. Herbonme put her hand straight in the air.

“I don’t know, sir,” said Hairy.

“Tut, tut,” sneered Vape. “Too good to crack the books? The resins are formed within the trichomes, tiny capitate stalks which are concentrated on the plant’s floral clusters. Let’s try again, Pothead. Something

easier perhaps. What are the two main methods used to separate, or extract, these resinous trichomes from raw marijuana?"

Hairy still didn't even know what many of those words meant. "I don't know sir," he replied.

Vape continued to ignore Herbonme's quivering raised hand.

"Pothead, do you even know what THC stands for?"

"No sir, but I think she does," answered Hairy, pointing at Herbonme.

"For your information, Pothead, THC is the main psychoactive compound in cannabis, and its full name is Tetrahydrocannabinol. It is one of many cannabinoids, each with unique effects and characteristics.

"Oh," continued Vape, "and the two main methods which we will be studying here are solvents and sieves, Pothead. They are the keys. With proper use of these two tools, you can harvest the resinous trichomes and reduce cannabis to its most essential elements, creating most potent potions indeed! Well? Why aren't you all copying this down?"

The rest of the class went even worse. Vape spent a great deal of time drawing complex chemical diagrams on the chalkboard and using words with more syllables than Hairy could count. His fingers soon ached from taking so many notes.

Finally, Vape put down the chalk and told the students to pair up for a practical cold-water sieve extraction exercise. He gave each duo a five-gallon bucket, a bag full of dried cannabis leaves and small buds, an electric eggbeater, and a set of five color-coded canvas bags, which had fine mesh screens sewn into their flat bottoms.

"Line the bags inside the bucket," instructed Vape, sweeping around the classroom and watching their progress, "then fill it with ice-water and add the dried leaves and trim. Stir it thoroughly using the egg-beater, to ensure that all the trichomes are removed from the plant material."

Hairy and Gon had teamed up, and they worked diligently to follow Vape's instructions.

"Good work Narco," said Vape, watching as his favored pupil poured dried marijuana leaves and small bits of bud into his bucket. Suddenly there was a ruckus next to Hairy, and he turned to see Shakey struggling with his eggbeater. He had gotten it caught on the bags and it was twisting uncontrollably, water and soggy green leaves were sloshing out of his bucket.

"Argh!" yelled Shakey, holding the eggbeater with both hands as it spun the bucket in circles and wrapped the layered bags into tight knots. His feet slipped on spilled water, and Shakey was lying on his back in a spreading pool of green mush before Vape finally

reached him and tore the smoking mixer from his grip.

"Idiot boy!" snarled Vape, then immediately turned on Hairy. "You, Pothead, why didn't you stop him from making such a mess? Thought he'd make you look good with his incompetence, did you? Both of you will stay after class to clean up this disaster."

This was clearly unfair. Hairy opened his mouth to complain, but shut it without speaking. He knew that if he challenged Vape it would only make things worse.

Finally the class was over, and most students had a little pouch of moist, freshly made hash powder to bring away. Vape dismissed the rest of the class and Hairy sadly said goodbye to Gon and Herbonme, who both agreed that Vape obviously had it in for him for some reason.

Vape handed Hairy and Shakey each a mop and told them to clean the whole classroom floor, as "it wouldn't look right" if they only mopped the place where Shakey had spilled water.

"I shall return shortly, but you can leave when you're done," said Vape, striding out of the classroom. "However, if the mopping isn't done properly then you'll both be back again tomorrow to mop it all once more."

Alone with Shakey, Hairy knew that this punishment wasn't really his classmate's fault, but he still felt resentful about the whole situation. They worked together quickly, but mostly in silence. It took a long time to mop the entire classroom floor, but finally they were done.

They had gotten halfway back to their dorm through the many winding hallways and stairwells before Hairy remembered that he had left his notebook behind in the classroom. He sighed, said goodbye to Shakey and began the long walk back to the dungeon and the Extractions room.

As he approached the open classroom door, Hairy heard Professor Vape's voice echoing down the hall.

"But if the Prisoner of Vatican has truly escaped, then perhaps the boy is in danger..."

Hairy stopped to listen as another voice replied. He recognized the powerful and soothing tones of Duinthadope. "Surely, Vacuous, Dilirius Bake will not try to come here? He doesn't know our hidden location, and this would be the most dangerous place on earth for him. You know, some people even say that he was not to blame for the Pothead's murder."

Hairy gasped. They were talking about his parents! The boy in danger was him!

"Bah," spat back Vape, "the Potheads were fools to trust him, and you are a fool to question his guilt. Have you forgotten the video of him igniting the blaze? You know that Bake was the traitor who led Officer Whats-

his-face directly to the Potheads! Now he could be just as easily be coming straight here, to finish the job!”

Hairy didn’t like hearing his parents or Duinthadope called fools. Part of him wanted to leap into the classroom and tell Vape that he was the fool, not his parents. But he restrained himself, and kept listening.

“The Council of Canabians wants to send Inquisitors to help protect the school, but I refused them,” continued the Master Head. “I don’t want those things on my campus. However, I have instructed Agros to keep a close watch on the internal security systems. If Dilirius comes even close to the school grounds then he will surely show up on one of the cameras.”

“Don’t be so sure Alwaze,” replied Professor Vape. “Dilirius Bake is a slippery fellow, catching him is like holding smoke in your fist. He escaped from Vatican! And he knew the school better than almost anyone. Don’t underestimate him, or we all could suffer.”

Hairy heard the distinctive deep gurgle of the tube-bong as Duinthadope’s only reply.

“Of course, I don’t trust anything the Vatican says,” continued Vape. “But our spies confirm that Dilirius was being held in the Vatican dungeons for the past fifteen years, and that now he has somehow recently escaped.”

“Yes, yes Vacuous,” replied Duinthadope. “I know, I know.”

“And what about the attack on Professor Cheeba, which prevented him teaching this year, has that been solved?”

“Do you think that is related to Bake?” said Duinthadope. “He was killed, yes, but it happened off-campus, and weeks before Dilirius escaped. The who and why have not yet been determined, but Highly Splifpassie is a suitable Defense replacement.”

“That was not my point,” said Vape, his voice rising in frustration.

“Rest assured that I do take these matters seriously,” replied Duinthadope soothingly. “I am also well aware of the implications of the Greengolds break-in. Its a good thing Hogride got there before the thieves did.” He heard the scraping of a chair as Duinthadope rose. “We can discuss this further at the staff meeting tomorrow.”

Hairy scurried back down the hall and ducked into a shadowy alcove. Soon Duinthadope passed by, carrying his long glass bong in a sling, apparently oblivious to Hairy’s presence. After a few breathless moments Hairy emerged and headed back down the hall and into the Extractions room.

Professor Vape was seated behind his desk, reading a thick book as Hairy entered. “Yes?” he said distractedly, without looking up.

“Uh, I forgot my textbook,” said Hairy, going to fetch it from his desk.

“Quickly then!” sneered Vape, and as Hairy scurried out of the room he heard the Professor mutter, “Idiot boy! Just like his father.”

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Toker Etiquette



Hairy’s absolutely favorite class was Toker Etiquette, taught by Professor Moruvva McGanjagal. For the first few lessons they had been covering the basics of joint use: how to roll, when and how to pass, keeping the circle, and common toking errors such as fish-lipping, microphoning, and premature stubbing of a viable roach.

Hairy loved learning all the different ways to prepare and smoke marijuana, yet in some ways Hairy hated coming to Toker Etiquette as much as he did Extractions. This was because Toker Etiquette was the other class that Growindor had together with the Snytcherins.

Professor McGanjagal had asked them to bring their personal glass bongs to the next class, and insisted that they be completely cleaned and fresh for the lesson. Hairy had scrubbed his Double-Bubbler clean as new, using rock salt and isopropyl alcohol as McGanjagal had suggested. The combination cleaned off all of the gunk without scratching the glass.

To start the class, McGanjagal had all the students fill their bongs with water and then hold them up for inspection. She examined each student’s grip and bong, adjusting a finger here, adding a little water there, while explaining the basics of bong use and etiquette.

“Bong toking involves three steps,” she intoned seriously. “The initial Draw fills the chamber with as much smoke as you think you can inhale. Always start small so you don’t choke. Next comes the Breather. Cover the mouthpiece with your hand and exhale. Finally you take the Hit, where you take your thumb off of the carb hole and suck the smoke into your lungs.”

She continued to examine the students as she spoke. “Make sure to clear the chamber of stale smoke before you pass the bong. And of course, never exhale into the bong, or you’ll soon have a wet lap.”

McGanjagal then took a big bag of marijuana from

out of her desk drawer and placed a small bud into the bowl of Snytcherin student Colin DaCopper's bong.

"I want each of you to take a toke for me in turn," she announced, "so I can examine your technique and style."

Colin lit his bowl and inhaled the sweet smoke. While McGanjagal adjusted Colin's hands and posture, Hairy felt something small and wet hit the back of his head. He reached up and took a spitball out of his dreads, then looked back and saw Narco smiling malevolently, a straw in his hand.

As McGanjagal moved on to Shakey Bagbottom, Hairy sat with his eyes closed, fuming and wondering how to get Narco off his back. Suddenly, he heard a spluttering, and saw that Shakey was gagging and coughing uncontrollably. He had somehow inhaled a lungful of bong water and seemed to be spurting it out of his nose! McGanjagal took the bong from his hands and helped him to his feet. Shakey could barely stand, he was coughing and hacking up bong water and phlegm as McGanjagal held him and supported his weight.

"I'm going to have to take Shakey to the nurse," she said as she led him to the door. "You should all begin reading from page 68 of *Best of Cannabis Culture Volume Two*, and keep on until I get back. There is to be no unsupervised bong usage until I return."

Soon the students were all alone in the class. Hairy glanced over at Gon, then opened his textbook and began to read. He was immediately interrupted by the sneering voice of Narco.

"Poor little Growindors, can't handle your tokes? Looks like your star pupil Shakey likes bong water better than smoke."

Hairy couldn't restrain himself. "Shut up Narco," he said loudly.

"Ooooh," mocked Narco, strutting over to Hairy and putting his hands on his hips. "Whatcha going to do Pothead? Cry to your mummy?" He smiled cruelly. "Oh yeah, I forgot that she's dead."

Blinded with rage, Hairy rose up, ready to throttle Narco, but his Snytcherin nemesis danced back behind a desk and out of his reach.

While Hairy was distracted, Finke grabbed Hairy's Double-Bubbler from off of his desk. Before Hairy could stop him, Finke had tossed the bong carelessly through the air to Narco, who caught it easily in one hand.

"Give that back!" yelled Hairy, jumping at Narco again, but he was blocked by the hulking form of Teller who moved to stand in his path.

Narco backed away, stuffing a bud into the bowl of Hairy's bong as he spoke. "Nice bong Hairy," he sneered. "I wonder what it's like to smoke from the same bong as the magnificent Hairy Pothead."

Narco flicked his lighter over the bowl and drew in a large toke; Hairy could see him getting his filthy saliva onto the mouthpiece as he inhaled. Hairy was enraged. Then he saw Gon duck around behind Teller and grab Narco's black glass dragon bong from where it was sitting unprotected on Narco's desk.

Gon hurled Narco's bong through the air to Hairy, who ran back and almost stumbled over a chair as he dove to catch it. Narco froze as Hairy managed to snag the bong safely, and stuffed a bud inside the bowl. The rest of the Growindors applauded as Hairy evened the score against Narco, except for Herbonme, who looked as if she wished everyone would just get back to the studying.

Hairy felt a bit disgusted to be using Narco's bong, but he placed his lips against the dragon's mouth and applied flame to the detachable bowl embedded between its wings. He drew in a massive toke, staring fixedly at Narco the whole time.

Narco, alarmed, expelled the smoke from his lungs and put Hairy's bong back onto his desk. "OK Hairy, enough's enough. There's your Double-Bubbler back, now give me mine."

Hairy held the mighty toke in his lungs, and glared at Narco, unsure how to act. His moment of indecision was all the chance that Finke needed, who simply reached out and snatched back Narco's bong from out of Hairy's hands.

"Students!" came the voice of Professor McGanjagal from the open doorway. "By the seed and the stalk, what is going on here? Everyone back to your desks, now!"

Hairy returned to his desk along with the rest of the class, still holding a lungful of smoke, now not daring to exhale the evidence of his misbehavior. He sat down at his desk and placed his now dirty and obviously used bong in front of him. He glanced back at Narco, and saw him smirking as he slid out the removable glass bowl from his dragon bong, and slipped in a clean one from his pocket.

"Has someone been toking up in here while I was gone helping Shakey?" asked McGanjagal sternly and sniffing the air. "I told you I wanted no bong use while I was gone. Who disobeyed me?"

None of the students spoke. Hairy felt his face growing red with embarrassment, and with the lack of oxygen as he still held his breath.

"Very well then," continued McGanjagal slowly, surveying the class as she spoke. "I will not be played the fool. I'll find the culprit." She began walking slowly between their desks, eyeing each student and each bong as she passed. Hairy felt as if he was going to burst, and he knew he would be in trouble when she saw his dirty bong, but he still did not let himself exhale.

McGanjagal seemed to take forever to reach him, walking calmly up one row and down the next, pausing briefly at Narco's desk, but then continuing on in silence. Inside, Hairy seethed at how Narco had manipulated the situation so that now Hairy would be the one facing punishment.

McGanjagal sighed and shook her head imperceptibly as she passed Gon and his leaking bong, and then finally she stood before Hairy's desk, where she saw that his bong had obviously been recently used.

"Hairy Pothead, I am very disappointed in you," sighed McGanjagal, with an odd glint in her eye. "Please exhale."

Hairy slowly exhaled a huge cloud of smoke as he finally let the token go, and then inhaled with a gasp.

"Up Pothead, let's go," said McGanjagal, and Hairy rose numbly, his fingers and toes still tingling from holding in the token for so long. Hairy saw the triumphant look on Narco's face as he followed in Professor McGanjagal's wake out of the classroom doors.

McGanjagal swept along without looking back at him, and Hairy struggled to keep up. He felt terrible, sure he was about to receive some horrible punishment, or perhaps even be expelled. He felt his paranoia rising as the cannabinoids from the massive hit continued to flood his bloodstream and make his heart race. McGanjagal led him down unfamiliar corridors until they stopped outside another classroom, where she opened the door and poked her head inside.

"Excuse me, Professor Kiseru, could I borrow Hurd for a moment?"

Hairy wondered what she wanted with the Leader of Growindor House. Was Olfyber Hurd going to help in punishing Hairy?

"Follow me, you two," McGanjagal said as Olfyber emerged from his class, looking puzzled. She led them both to the end of the hall, and into an empty classroom.

"Hurd," she said, smiling broadly, "I've found you a new Toker."

Olfyber's expression changed from puzzlement to delight.

"Are you serious, Professor?"

"Absolutely," said McGanjagal crisply. "The boy's a natural. I've never seen anything like it. He held in a huge blast for at least three minutes without straining."

Hairy didn't have a clue what was going on, but he didn't seem to be getting expelled, and some of the feeling was coming back into his extremities.

Olfyber suddenly looked at Hairy like all his dreams had come true at once.

"Ever seen a game of Qannabbi, Pothead?" he asked excitedly.

"Hurd is the captain of Growindor team," explained McGanjagal.

"He's just the right build for a Toker too," said Olfyber, walking around Hairy and staring at him. "We'll need to get him a decent vaporizer, professor, a Nimbus 4200 I'd say."

"I shall speak to Duinthadope and see if we can't bend the first-year rule," said McGanjagal. "By the Green Man, we need a better team than last year!" She then peered over her glasses at Hairy. "I want to hear that you're training hard, Pothead, or I may change my mind about punishing you."

McGanjagal suddenly smiled. "Your father would be proud," she added. "He was an excellent Qannabbi player himself."

Professor McGanjagal left them alone and Olfyber sat down across from Hairy.

"Qannabbi is a very popular sport among Weedsters," began Olfyber excitedly. "It is the most important game in the world. Do you understand Hairy?"

Olfyber continued without giving Hairy a chance to reply.

"The rules of Qannabbi are simple and elegant. Each team has five players. There's two Trimmers, one Grinder, one Rollpacker, and one Toker."

"Right," said Hairy, trying his best to memorize everything Olfyber was saying.

"The goal is for the team to clean, prepare and consume their marijuana as quickly and efficiently as possible. Each team begins with a set amount of unmanicured marijuana buds. The actual amount depends on the level of play, usually around an ounce for a standard match, and up to four ounces for full-on international tournaments."

"Wow!" said Hairy.

"So the job of the Trimmers is to quickly manicure the buds, removing the stalk and stem and leaf from the buds. They each get one small pair of scissors, and that's it. Your team gets penalized if you clip away too much bud, the rules are very strict."

"I see," said Hairy, trying to keep everything straight.

"The Grinder's job is to grind the buds up into something more smokable. No tools are allowed except for a standard hand grinder. The Rollpacker will be rolling the ground-up buds into joints, and also packing the bong and vaporizer for faster toking."

"OK..."

"But the biggest job on the team, the one player who is the key, is the Toker. The Toker has to inhale the smoke or vapor from every single bit of bud. The Toker must have lungs of iron and a perfect ability to maintain their high and not get the giggles or munchies in

the middle of a game.”

“And that’s me?” asked Hairy, unbelieving.

“If you’ve got half the lungs that McGanjagal thinks you have, then I think you’ll do just fine.” Olfyber took Hairy’s hand in his and gave it a firm shake. “Welcome to the team, Hairy Pothead!”

CHAPTER TWELVE

Four-Twenty



he next few weeks went by in a haze. It seemed like whenever Hairy wasn’t in class, he was practicing for Qannabbi. For Hairy, this mostly meant doing breathing exercises and inhaling huge quantities of cannabis smoke and vapor. Every day his bloodstream was saturated with cannabinoids, and his mind was floating on clouds of sweet, sticky smoke.

Along with Olfyber, who played Rollpacker, the Growindor Qannabbi team consisted of Fried and Gage Weedly as Trimmers, and a rosy-cheeked girl with blond pigtails named Crystal Nuggs as Grinder. They would meet in one of the empty classrooms to practice, and Olfyber would coach them as they clipped, chopped, rolled and inhaled their way through vast quantities of marijuana. One of the things Hairy liked most about practice was the chance to use the vaporizer, which normally first-year students were not allowed to do.

The vaporizer they were using was a Volcano model. It had a detachable plastic bag on top which inflated upwards as it was pumped full of hot air. The air passed through ground-up marijuana buds first, steaming off the psychoactive cannabinoids so they could be inhaled from the bag. Olfyber showed Hairy how to detach the bag when it was full, and then how to clip on the nozzle and inhale the potent vapors.

“You need to be able to do this in a smooth motion,” explained Olfyber. “Every second counts in Qannabbi.” He passed Hairy a freshly filled bag of vapors. “Inhale this, and let me know what you think.”

Hairy took the clear plastic bag from Olfyber and placed the nozzle to his lips. He inhaled, and was surprised by the delicacy of the taste. Normally when he inhaled marijuana, Hairy felt like he was almost drinking the thick, heavy smoke, but this was different. This felt more like he was inhaling flavored air; air perfumed

with the purest essence of cannabis.

As Hairy held the vapor token in his lungs, he felt the familiar wave of marijuana awareness come upon him; but instead of hitting him hard like a wave; it rose gently like an ocean swell. Hairy exhaled slowly, and was surprised to see almost nothing in his breath, just the slightest hint of a mist.

“Delicious!” said Hairy, smacking his lips.

Hairy didn’t just need to master the ability to inhale vast quantities of cannabis; he also practiced doing the cleaning, grinding and rolling as well.

“We begin each game with a big batch of unmanicured marijuana buds,” explained Olfyber. “To start, all of us pitch in and help with trimming off the excess leaf and stalk. Once we’ve made a good start, Crystal breaks off and starts grinding, and then I follow her and start rolling joints and packing the bong and vaporizer for the Toker – that’s you Hairy. You join us right after that, to start inhaling the joints and bowls that I have prepared.”

Speed was of the essence, but they couldn’t afford to get sloppy. A team could get disqualified if they left behind too many smokable bits of bud. If the Trimmer tossed out any bits of bud along with the stalk and leaf, or if the Rollpacker let too much weed fall out of the joints he was rolling, then the team could lose the game before it was even over. On the other hand, if they left too much stalk and leaf in the joints and bong hits, it would make it harder for the Toker to inhale everything without starting to splutter and cough.

Although the team practiced often, they only played against the clock. The actual Qannabbi season began on April 21, the day after the most sacred day in the Weedster calendar. Celebrated as Four-Twenty by Weedsters around the world, at Hempwards April 20 was a day off classes, and a day for enjoying the even larger quantities of marijuana than usual.

On April 19, the Growindors and Rastalaws had another Gardening class with Sprout. She said that today they were having a bit of a field trip; they would be going to the outdoor cannabis gardens to visit Hogride, who would be teaching them a lesson in Plant Protection. Hairy and the other Growindors had been hoping that Hogride would be teaching them how to make tricky booby-traps, but instead today’s lesson was about keeping animals away from your outdoor crop.

“Booby-traps have their place,” Hogride explained, chomping on the stub end of an extinguished blunt, “but the real art of plant protection is makin’ sure no-one finds yer crop, an’ that no animals eat it.”

Hogride had a big bag of dog fur, and a mister bottle labeled with a sticker saying FLUFFY.

"Yeh jus' put a little of tha dog fur onta yer plant, and also on any nearby plants as well," said Hogride, showing them how it was done. "Then yeh spray some dog pi... er, dog pee in the area, but not directly on yer plant, mind. That'll scare away deer an' other little critters that might munch yer plants."

After class, Hogride took Hairy aside.

"It's Four-Twenty tomorrow 'airy," said the beefy biker. "I wanted ta give yeh a heads-up, that there might jus' be somethin' special waitin' for yeh in yer room. I can't give yeh nothin' now cuz it wouldn't look righ' in front of tha other students." Hogride squeezed Hairy's shoulder with his massive hand before letting him run off to catch up with Herbonme and Gon.



The next day there was no classes, and instead they had an in-school holiday. There was a morning Four-Twenty feast in the Great Hall, much like the Waykenbake, with each House's long table draped in House colors and set out with ornate silver bowls full of Hempwards buds. The students were served endless varieties of delicious hemp-based foods, followed by something new: deliciously potent cannabis-based desserts.

Master Head Duinthadope rose from his centre seat at the Head Table, and took a huge hit from his ornate tube bong to get everyone's attention.

"I have some announcements to make," he finally intoned, spewing smoke as he spoke. "I do not wish to

be a downer on this most important of holidays, but for the next few weeks it is necessary for all students to stay in their House common rooms or dormitories from 4:20 Sydney time until morning. We are instituting this curfew for your own safety, and we ask that all students honor this request."

Hairy felt the hairs rise on the back of his neck as Duinthadope spoke those words. The curfew must be because of the man that Vape and Duinthadope had been discussing, the one who had escaped from the Vatican prison, Dilirius Bake!

"Also, be careful with the desserts," warned Duinthadope, picking up a huge chocolate-covered pastry and cramming most of it into his mouth. "Fey are fery popent!" he shouted, spraying crumbs all the way down his long white beard.

When the dessert cart came by, Hairy chose a Maple Chronic Square, which was served on a bed of fresh baby hemp leaves and drizzled with pot toffee. He couldn't resist adding a piece of Hash Fudge to his plate as well, especially when he saw Gon taking a huge piece of Cannabaklava, three Ganja Goo Balls and a handful of Caramel Potcorn, while also pocketing plenty of Space Pops and Turkish Delights for later. Herbonme traded Gon a piece of her Apple Pot Pie and Honey oil Vanilla Pudding for a taste of a Goo Ball.

All agreed that the desserts were amazingly delicious. Hairy felt his worries ease and his limbs growing heavy and tingling as they made their way back to the Growindor common room after the meal.

Hairy went to the dormitory to get changed, and was surprised to see a box sitting on his bed, covered in gift-wrap paper with a repeating design of cannabis buds. He assumed it was from Hogride, but realized his mistake when he read the card on the top of the box, written with an elaborately flowing script.

*Dear Hairy,
I hope this helps our new Toker to win Growindor
the Qannabbi Bowl!
Happy 4/20.
M.M.*

Hairy exhaled in anticipation, set aside the card and opened the box. He pulled out a shiny vaporizer... a Nimbus 4200! It was a sleek, stylish machine, with digital temperature control; multiple docking ports for vapor bags and hoses, and a variety of other knobs and dials that Hairy had no idea how to use.

"Wow!" said Gon, his eyes popping out of his head in excitement as Hairy brought the Nimbus 4200 out into the common room. "That is one smooth machine. Who is it from? Can we try it?"



Gon had been jealous of Hairy's special status as the school's youngest Toker, and he became even more envious now as Hairy explained that the Nimbus 4200 was a gift from Professor McGanjagal, to help him win at Qannabbi. Hairy flicked on the machine, then busted up some of the Hempwards house weed and slipped it into the retractable chamber. Another switch was flicked, and immediately potent vapors were flowing out of a hose and between Gon's eager lips.

Hairy repacked the vaporizer for Herbonme, and watched as she took a hose and drew the vapors into her lungs.

"This is great Hairy!" she said, exhaling a tiny bit of mist. "If you use this for Qannabbi it'll definitely give you an advantage!"

Their fellow Growindor housemates had soon gathered around, and they spent the rest of the afternoon sharing and experimenting with the Nimbus 4200, getting incredibly high as the vapors interlocked and expanded the effects of the cannabis-laden desserts now flooding their bloodstreams.

When Hairy finally lay down in his curtained bed late that night, his exhausted mind still reeling with expanded perceptions, he felt a lump under his pillow. He reached under and, to his surprise, pulled out an odd hand-held computer, with a small keypad and screen. There was a card taped to it, which Hairy opened to read a similar note as had been on the vaporizer, but written in a smaller, less tidy script.

*Dear Hairy,
This belonged to your father. I know he would
want you to have it.
Don't tell anyone that you have this.
From your friend.*

Hairy assumed this was the gift that Hogride had mentioned, and he put down the card to examine the strange device. It had a tiny keyboard and a small screen, and the word "Eyepalm" was engraved at its top. Hairy instinctively flicked it on. It took a moment to start up, and the word BLUEBERRY flashed across the screen, followed by a complex series of colored lines, which Hairy quickly realized was a schematic map of the entire Cannabis Castle! He fiddled with the buttons and after a few minutes he figured out how to scroll between the castle's various levels and sections. Some areas were marked with red, and Hairy realized that those must be some of the hidden passageways and secret rooms.

Hairy turned one of the knobs, and suddenly Professor Vape flicked onto the screen. He was working in the Extractions Lab, boiling up some sort of potion

on the burner. Hairy's heart skipped a beat, but he quickly realized that Vape was completely unaware of being observed.

Hairy played with the buttons, and found that he could get the picture from dozens of secret cameras hidden throughout the school. He flipped past several images, seeing into empty classrooms, catching Professor Splifpassie wheeling a covered equipment cart down a lonely corridor, watching students sitting in the Puffintuff common room, and a view of the Snytcherin's four-poster beds all draped in black.

Hairy's mind began reeling as he realized the implications of this gift. He could spy on the whole school, and also explore the secret passages as well!

He looked over at his new Vaporizer, resting on the stand next to his bed, and imagined his father getting super high on potent vapors, and then using the Eyepalm to secretly roam the castle's many hidden passageways during the midnight hours.

Hairy switched on the vaporizer again, now too excited to sleep. While he waited for the Nimbus 4200 to warm up, he flipped through the various camera views, hoping to find something interesting. He caught another glimpse of Professor Splifpassie, now walking down a long stairwell into the castle dungeons. Hairy watched him idly for a few moments, noticing that Splifpassie had a slight limp which he had never seen before.

Hairy lost sight of the professor as he went down a short hallway, and so he flipped through the maps and cameras, then called up the main map that showed the entire Cannabis Castle layout and the placement of all the cameras. Hairy flicked a switch on the controller, and saw a blue dot appear on the screen, which he quickly realized marked his Eyepalm's location.

Then Hairy saw a second dot wink on, colored orange, located deep in the Cannabis Castle dungeons. He flicked through the camera views for that area, but there was no camera showing inside that room. However, he did see Professor Splifpassie walking down a hallway, and enter the room with the orange dot inside. The door swung shut behind Splifpassie, and Hairy could see words written on it: Experimental Grow Chamber #23.

Hairy's mind was reeling with the implications of his discoveries. He wondered why Hogride had given him this gift, and what he was expected to do. Surely Hogride would have known that Hairy would see the orange dot? Could Hogride have wanted him to seek it out?

After another moment, the orange dot winked out.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Grow Room of Secrets



Hairy sat up in bed and put on his robes. He took another long inhalation from the Nimbus 4200 and then turned it off. He picked up the Eyepalm computer unit and then slid between the curtains around his bed. He tiptoed out of the Growindor sleeping chamber, glad that Herbonme and Gon were both asleep in their curtained beds, so they couldn't ask him any questions.

Only Mel O'Yello was in the Growindor common room. She was sitting back on an easy chair, wearing headphones, tapping her feet and smoking a fattie with her eyes closed. Hairy passed by her unnoticed.

Hairy remembered the route down to the room where the orange dot had been displayed, so he made his way quickly through the empty hallways. Occasionally he stopped, using the Eyepalm to check the cameras and ensure the way ahead was clear. It was late, and the Castle's halls were mostly deserted at this hour.

Soon Hairy had reached the area he sought – the lowest depths of the Castle, where the Experimental Grow Rooms were. Hairy knew that these rooms were where some Professors kept their special breeding experiments, in carefully isolated chambers so that they couldn't be contaminated by stray pollen or bacteria.

He turned on his computer to check the map again, and saw that he was near the entrance to a secret passage, but he didn't need to go that way and so didn't bother to explore. Instead he continued down the corridor and soon had reached his goal. There was pair of doors that were marked with XGC in large letters. This was the section he sought.

Hairy gripped the twin door handles and pushed them open. He found himself suddenly looking straight into the mad, rolling eyes of a monstrous dog, a Doberman Pinscher which seemed as tall as Hairy himself. Its mouth dripped sticky saliva from yellowish fangs. Its fur was sleek and black, stretched over taut, powerful muscles. Its ears were sticking straight up and quivering with rage. Dangling from its spiked leather collar

was a silver bone-shaped tag with the word FLUFFY.

There was a moment's pause as Hairy and the dog stared at each other, both surprised. Then the dog lunged forward with all its might, teeth bared in a vicious snarl. Its bark was astonishingly loud, deafening Hairy and frightening him to the core.

Hairy gave a shrill scream, slammed the door shut right on the dog's face, and turned to run as fast as he could in the opposite direction, wild barks coming through the door and echoing down the hall after him.

His heart pounding, Hairy ran blindly down the corridor, sprinting until his lungs began to ache, half thinking that the vicious beast was still behind him.

Finally he came to his senses, and stopped to lean against the cool hemp brick of the dungeon wall. He flicked on his Eyepalm and took a moment to figure out where he was. Once he had his bearings he scanned the cameras in his area, and was startled to see the frightening figure of the Hempwards Caretaker, Agros Roach, striding down a corridor straight in his direction. Hairy panicked, realizing that Roach must have heard the commotion and was now pursuing him.

Scanning his computer frantically, Hairy saw that he wasn't far from another secret passage. He ran to the end of the hall, turned right, and jogged ten paces. There was a niche in the wall with a statue of famed Weedster and jazz icon, Louis Armstrong. Hairy desperately felt around the statue, trying to figure out how to open the door. Finally, he twisted the end of Armstrong's trumpet and a small opening appeared in the hemp brick wall behind the statue. Hairy slipped into the small tunnel and the door automatically slid shut as he passed. He flicked on the Eyepalm to see Roach striding past the statue and continuing on down the hall.

Relieved, Hairy made his way down the dark tunnel. It would let him out not too far from the Growindor common room, where he could end this night's impulsive escapade. He was excited by the powers the new computer gave him, and was already beginning to think of ways to get past that vicious dog.

Lost in thought, and feeling proud in himself for escaping the night's adventures unscathed, Hairy reached the end of the secret passage and opened the door, which he knew would emerge behind the statue of famed American cannabis farmer George Washington. Hairy slipped the Eyepalm into his pocket and went out of the secret door. He watched it close behind him, and then turned to see Professor Vape walking straight towards him!

Professor Vape was clearly as surprised to see Hairy, as Hairy was to see Vape. Both started back and took a breath, but then Vape strode forward purposefully with an angry look upon his face.



"Pothead!" he said sternly. "What are you doing wandering the corridors so late at night?"

Hairy's mouth opened, closed, then opened again as he tried to think of the right words to mollify Vape.

"What are you doing up at this hour, Pothead?" asked Vape, now standing next to Hairy and looking down at him like an angry hawk. "Do you think you have the run of the Castle, that the curfew applies to everyone except for you? Is that it, Pothead?"

"No sir," replied Hairy.

"Where did you come from?" asked Vape, looking at the statue of George Washington with curiosity. "Where are you going?"

"I – I was just going for a jaunt," said Hairy, regretting his words as soon as he had spoken them.

"A jaunt? You were just going for a jaunt?" replied Vape sarcastically. "There are rules in this school Hairy, and students have been expelled for less."

Hairy didn't know what to say.

"Your parents gave their lives to keep you alive Hairy," continued Vape. "It's a poor way to repay them, putting yourself in danger by disobeying the rules."

Hairy remained silent. He didn't like it when Vape spoke about his parents.

"Are you deaf boy?" shouted Vape. "Did you not hear Duinthadope say that all students must be in bed at night? There are dark forces at work Pothead, and some people consider you and your pathetic little life to be very, very important. There's a reason Whatshisface killed your parents, and why he tried to kill you."

Vape paused, as if considering whether he should speak further. Hairy didn't answer, and after a moment, Vape continued.

"There's a man named Dilirius Bake, and he is a traitor to Hempwards and to our kind. Bake helped Whatshisface to kill your parents, and he's been in a special prison since that time. But now he has escaped, and there's good reason to believe that he will be coming here.

"Hempwards is a well guarded school," continued Vape, "and well hidden. But if Dilirius Bake does come here, it will be to find you Hairy Pothead, and to kill you."

Hairy gulped.

"So I think you should be a little more respectful to those of us trying to keep you safe by giving you rules to follow. The world doesn't revolve around you Hairy Pothead, even if some people like to pretend otherwise."

There was another moment of silence. Vape stared at Hairy without speaking.

"Turn out your pockets," said Vape finally.

"M-my pockets?" said Hairy, stuttering nervously.

"Yes Pothead. Empty your pockets."

Hairy reluctantly began taking objects out of his pockets. He pulled out a pack of matches, some rol-lies, a couple of loose buds, and then finally he had no choice but to pull out the Eyepalm. Vape snatched it from his hand.

"What is this, Pothead?" he asked sternly, turning the unit over in his hands.

"Uh... it's... uh..." said Hairy, not knowing what to say.

"Good evening Vacuous," said a voice from down the dark hallway. Both Hairy and Professor Vape turned to see Professor Splifpassie walking towards them with a large smile on his face, wearing his sunglasses even though they were in a dimly lit corridor. "Good evening, Hairy," he continued. Hairy noticed that Splifpassie was still walking with a limp.

"Professor Splifpassie," said Vape, looking at the professor with an odd expression. "I was just questioning Hairy about why he is out so late at night, and now I've found this in his pocket!" He thrust the computer out for Splifpassie to see.

Splifpassie took the Eyepalm unit in his hand and smiled at Vape warmly. "Hairy was meeting me here. I apologize if there's been any difficulty?"

"He said he was out for a jaunt!" said Vape, fuming.

"Yes, it's all part of this new project we've been working on," replied Splifpassie evenly. "Part of our hiding practice for Protection Against the Drug Cops. Come with me Hairy, and let this be a lesson to you, that no matter where you're hiding, you must always expect the unexpected. Thank you Professor Vape."

Vape looked so angry that Hairy half-expected to see smoke come out of his ears. Hairy tried to keep his face as neutral as possible as Splifpassie led him away from Vape and down the hall. Hairy walked silently beside Splifpassie for what seemed like an eternity. Finally, Splifpassie stopped at a hallway intersection near the Growindor common room.

"I don't know what you were doing out so late," said Splifpassie, grimacing slightly as he spoke. "I also don't know what this is," he continued, passing Hairy the computer. "And I don't want to know. But I do know what Vape can be like. When I stumbled upon you and him together, I couldn't resist the urge to rescue you."

"Thanks..." said Hairy, smiling weakly.

"You be careful," said Splifpassie. "And don't get yourself expelled."

Hairy continued back to the Growindor dormitory in silence. There was a brown smudge on his Eyepalm, and he wiped it off without thinking. He was feeling guilty about having been caught breaking the rules, sad because he had been reminded of his parents'

death, and worried about the threat of Dilirius Bake.

Hairy had a fitful sleep that night. He dreamed that he was running down endless corridors, being chased by a terrifying, shadowy figure that combined the worst features of Professor Vape, Agros Roach, Dilirius Bake and Officer Pasdepot. In front of him were the receding figures of his parents, reaching out to him. In his dream, Hairy knew if he reached them he would be safe, but he could not get close enough.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Qannabbi



The next morning was a blur. Hairy awoke from his disturbing dreams with Gon shaking him and calling his name.

“Hairy, you’re running late! I thought you were up hours ago! You’ve got your first game in five minutes!”

Hairy couldn’t believe that he had forgotten his first Qannabbi match! He tugged on his robes and ran downstairs to the Qannabbi Hall, his eyes still crusted with sleep and his dreads sticking out in even more directions than usual. As he entered the large hall, Hairy saw the rest of his teammates were already dressed in their golden team colors and facing off against the Rastalaw team over the Qannabbi Table. He ran over sheepishly to join his fellows, tugging his Growindor uniform on over his robes.

Professor Kiseru was there, dressed in black and white striped hemp silk robes, checking the smoking implements and preparing to begin the match.

Many dozens of other students and faculty were gathered to watch the opening game of the season, sitting on raised benches that extended around the hall. Hairy saw Gon joining Herbonme in the audience, sitting with other students from the Growindor House. Even Professor McGanjagal was there; she gave Hairy a private smile. There were Puffintuff and Rastalaw students watching too, as well as a cluster of Snytcherin, dressed all in black and sitting in the top row of seats. Even from this distance, Hairy could make out Narco’s trademark sneer.

Hairy jumped as he heard the commentator’s voice booming out over the amplifier. It was Indo Zoomer, a third year Puffintuff known for his rapid-fire verbal delivery.

“Both Growindor and Rastalaw are looking in fine

form today, except for Hairy Pothead, who seems to be yawning and rubbing his eyes. There’s a lot of pressure on Pothead, he’s the youngest Toker that Hempwards has seen in over a decade.”

Wishing that Indo would shut up, Hairy blushed and rubbed his face to help wake him up, then looked around at his teammates. Olfyber was frowning at him, clearly angry at Hairy for showing up late for the first game of the season. Hairy smiled meekly and shifted his gaze to the table. There was a large silver bowl of unmanicured marijuana set out for each team, probably about a half-ounce or so of actual buds once they had been destalked and trimmed. These weren’t the fat, well-manicured colas Hairy normally saw, these were smaller buds, still on the stalk, surrounded by plenty of dry leaf.

“Today the Rastalaws are celebrating Grounation Day,” continued Indo, “Will Jah smile upon them? We’ll find out soon enough. Their team Captain this year is the lovely Lionah Judah, who is back playing Grinder. Burru Nyabinghi and Kebra Nagast have also returned this year as Trimmers, with Cutchie Icense in her first year as Rollpacker. And Juan “Iron Lungs” Love is back as Rastalaw Toker for the third year in a row. He currently holds the Hempwards inhalation record for both six and nine foot bong hitting.”

Burru, Kebra and Lionah were all dark skinned, with dreads even bigger and thicker than Hairy’s. Lionah was stunningly beautiful, with large almond eyes and smooth, soft skin. Hairy was distracted as she tucked her dreads up under a huge tam woven with the colors red, green and yellow. Cutchie had rosy pink skin and blue eyes, her dreads were golden blond. Juan had smooth, olive skin and his black hair was short and straight. He was the only one on the Rastalaw team without dreadlocks.

Hairy heard the Rastalaws talking amongst themselves, but it sounded like they were speaking another language. “I and I muss a go kill mi dead, mon!” he heard one say, followed by “A’ight, I and I showem who it is da big bad bwoy. Zeen!” They were all dressed in Rastalaw Green, and they gathered in a small circle just before the game began, to make their team cheer: “Inity! Inity! Inity!”

“The Reeferee this game is Professor Kiseru,” noted Indo, “and he’s in no mood to wait. There’s the whistle! And look at those scissors go! The buds are being clipped clean at an amazing rate. Burru is snipping frantically, she suffered a sprained thumb last year and had to miss half a season. The strain this game is Jamaican Frenzy, provided direct from Hogride’s garden.

“Now the Grinders are breaking off, there goes Crystal Nuggs, beautiful wrist action there as she

grinds those buds into perfectly fluffy rolling material! This is a trickier job than it seems, and she has great finesse, but Lionah is matching her twist for twist. Now Olfyber Hurd is packing the big bong with his left hand and the new Nimbus 4200 with his right. Hairy takes a hit and he's off! And there goes Juan, sucking on a fat joint while Cutchie packs both bong and Volcano.

"Now we're coming through the first quarter, they're tied toke for toke. The Weedly twins are clipping like madmen, there doesn't seem to be any wasted buds yet, and it looks like Rastalaw is starting to fall slightly behind. But wait, what's this? It seems like Fried is having troubles with his scissors! Yes, they're jamming, slowing him down! Now he's actually stopped clipping so he can work on unjamming his scissors! He's scraping resin off the scissor blades, trying to clean them off. Gage is working hard but he can't keep up. Rastalaw is pulling ahead, Burru and Kebra methodically cleaning those buds. Rastalaw is passing halfway now, Cutchie is rolling and packing smoothly, feeding the herb to Juan, who is inhaling steadily with no coughs yet!"

Fried's scissor jam was slowing down the trimming, so Crystal was running out of buds to grind, and looked to Olfyber for direction. "Help Fried!" he shouted, desperately twisting up another fattie for Hairy to inhale.

Crystal jumped to Fried's side, and used her long fingernails to scrape the resin from his scissor blades. Within moments he has back trimming as fast as he could.

"Well it looks like Fried's scissors are clean now, so he's back in the game," continued Indo, "but Growindor is definitely behind. Hairy is inhaling smoothly. No coughs yet from either side, both teams really playing fantastically well today. It would have been closer but those jammed scissors really slowed down the Growindors. I bet Fried will be getting a lecture on proper scissor maintenance after this game!"

Hairy could see Fried scowling at the end of the table, his hands a blur as he trimmed as speedily as he could, Gage matching him snip for snip. Hairy took another huge bong hit and then inhaled a bag full of fresh vapors. Even though he had been training to handle such massive quantities of cannabis, his mind was still reeling as he dropped the vapor bag and put another fat joint between his lips.

"Rastalaw remains in the lead," announced Indo. "Unless Growindor pulls off a miracle it's going to be a very happy Grounation Day for the Rasta's!"

Hairy couldn't stand the thought of losing the game. Suddenly he had a wild idea. Sucking madly on the huge joint between his lips, he swept up the lighter into his grip and jumped to the other end of the Qannabbi Table. He grabbed the remaining unmanicured buds

in his hand, waved the lighter under them, and then inhaled the fumes directly from the leafy bouquet. The smoke was bitter and harsh, it contained far more leaf and stalk than bud, and it bit into Hairy's throat. He held back a cough, feeling his lungs quiver as he exhaled the rough smoke in a dense cloud.

Hairy took a small hit off the still burning joint in his mouth to help refresh his lungs, then inhaled again deeply from the smoldering cluster of buds in his hand. He could feel particulates and bits of hot ash going down deep into his body. He heard Olfyber gasp in surprise, but Hairy was lost in total concentration, keeping his burning lungs under control as he inhaled again and again on the heavy, dark smoke.

Indo was shocked and began blabbering into the microphone. "I – uh – this is amazing! Hairy Pothead is out of control! Is that – can he do that? This is an incredible feat, the strangest thing I've ever seen at a Qannabbi game! Professor Kiseru is allowing this, he's not calling a foul! I can't believe – what incredible lung control!"

Within moments, Hairy had inhaled all of the remaining unmanicured buds, plus all their surrounding leaf and stem, and the stalks too. His lungs ached and he felt dizzy. Fried and Gage gaped at him, their mouths open in surprise, as Hairy dropped the handful of ashes back onto the table, took the final hit off the now-tiny joint in his mouth, and then staggered back to the other end of the table to take another big bong hit and then inhale the fumes from the full vapor bag.

Olfyber recovered from his shock and packed the rest of the prepared buds into the bong. Hairy lit and inhaled them all in one final huge toke, then slammed down the bong and exhaled mightily. The Rastalaws were still working on their stash. They had been defeated.

Professor Kiseru signaled that Hairy's move was legal, and that Growindor was victorious.

"Growindor wins!" yelled Indo. "Growindor takes their first game! Thanks to Hairy Pothead, with his amazing last-minute inhalation surprise! What an unbelievable game! That may have been the best Qannabbi match since Pearly Sweetcake smoked the Calistoga Kid!"

Hairy's fellow Growindors seemed too stunned to react to their victory. But some of the Rastalaws were clearly upset by this sudden turn of events.

"Dem play a card mon!" muttered Burru under his breath, scowling and throwing down his scissors. "I and I canna tak mo downpression."

"Dat lil jacket a bunner," added Kebra angrily. "Him mek mi vex, mon!"

But their beautiful team captain spoke out louder, and defused the tension.

"Ease up bredren and sistren! Me dun feel bad," said Lionah forcefully. "All fruits be ripe."

She walked straight up to Hairy and stood so close that he could smell the sweet smoke still on her breath, mixed with her own naturally intoxicating scent. "Much reespek for my yute," she said, "da large 'airy Dreadhead!"

Lionah smiled at him and removed her tam, freeing her long dark dreads to cascade over her shoulders. Hairy could see silver rings, shells and sparkling gems woven into her thick, matted hair. She reached up and fingered Hairy's thick brown dreads. "Dis na coolie hair. Dem true bashy Rasta dreads! Ya na got dem sket dreaddies like dat Splifpassie mon." She tugged playfully on a handful of his hair. "Hairy, ya bad like yaz mon!"

Hairy was too stunned and stoned to speak, and he only half-understood what she was saying. Apparently Lionah liked his dreads better than their House Head's. He was definitely enjoying her attention, and he felt a tingle go down his spine when she touched him. For a moment he forgot about the aching pain in his lungs.

Lionah put her hands on her hips and looked dismissively at the rest of the Growindor team. "Why you wit dem bald head?" she said to Hairy. "Mastah Hairy Dreadhead mus come an' rope een wit da Rastalaw Mansion. You could be real Mistah Mention. Rastalaw da best yaad fer you, come an join I and I, Don Dreadhead."

It took Hairy a moment to realize that she was asking him to switch houses and join the Rastalaw team. He was flattered and flustered and was having a hard time thinking straight with this precocious older girl standing so close.

Lionah stood there, still in his personal space, looking straight into Hairy's eyes.

"Uh," croaked Hairy. "I can't switch houses, not right now..."

Somehow he felt like he needed to apologize why he couldn't join Rastalaw right there on the spot. His cheeks felt flushed, and this whole thing was making him very uncomfortable. It was also making him remember how he had "switched Houses" right at the beginning, by lying about which card he had drawn from the Picking Pot, and he didn't like thinking about that.

"Jah guide yu Mistah Dreadhead," said Lionah, finally stepping back, and then returning to her bewildered teammates. Juan looked particularly incensed at what had happened, and was staring daggers at Hairy. "Rest mon!" she said to him, grabbing the Rastalaw Toker's face and kissing his cheek. "Come gimme ex amount a lovin an agony."

Olfyber snapped out of his amazement, turned to his teammates and shouted "Three cheers for Hairy

Pothead! Hemp, Hemp, Hooray!"

Hairy looked around the stadium. Herbonme and Gon smiled and waved at him, the rest of the Growindors were clapping and hooting. The Snytcherins had all left.

Fried and Gage each slapped Hairy on the back to congratulate him. Then Crystal grabbed him and gave him a solid squeeze. "That was awesome!" she said, kissing him on the cheek.

Hairy turned an even deeper shade of red, but then he had to step back and turn away from his teammates. He felt as if he was finally about to give a huge cough. His lungs quivered in his chest, he felt his eyes watering, he remembered the painful feeling as he had sucked in the smoldering fumes of the thick stalks. He took a deep breath and steadied himself. His lungs hurt, but he did not cough at all.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Pottery of Sion



After the game, Hairy went back to the Growindor common room to relax his aching lungs. He was very tired after his late night expedition, followed by a poor sleep and the tense early-morning game. He hoped he wouldn't have to inhale so much stalk and leaf in every Qannabbi match.

All Hairy wanted to do was rest, but his housemates had other ideas. Everyone wanted to have a tokes with the iron-lunged hero who had won the game for Growindor. Hairy spent an hour smiling politely as Olfyber told the story of Hairy's amazing inhalation over and over again. Some people were already referring to his desperate trick as "The Pothead Maneuver."

Finally, Hairy had the chance to slip out of the common room and into the dormitory. Herbonme and Gon joined him to sit in privacy on his bed, behind the thick curtains. For the first time, Hairy told them about the Eyepalm computer unit that Hogride had given him for Four-Twenty, and how he had impulsively gone in search of the source of the orange dot he had seen on the map. He also told them about being caught by Professor Vape, and how Splifpassie had rescued him.

"You should have woken me too Hairy," said Gon. "I would have made sure that you didn't bump into Vape! I know exactly where –"

"Hairy, you have to turn that thing over to Duinthadope!" interrupted Herbonme. "Hogride shouldn't have given it to you. That is irresponsible!"

"Are you mad?" Gon asked Herbonme in amazement. "This thing is the best gift ever! You can actually spy on the whole school? You could find out everyone's secrets, blackmail Vape into giving you an A, even look in on the girls..." Gon looked off into the distance, imagining the endless possibilities.

Herbonme glared at Gon, then rolled her eyes, exasperated. "I hate to say it," she said to Hairy, "but Vape was right. You shouldn't have been sneaking around after hours! Duinthadope said not to."

"Yeah, I know," said Hairy. "I was just excited, and maybe all that pot food had me worked up as well." Hairy then told them what he had overheard Duinthadope and Vape saying about Dilirius Bake, his escape from the Vatican, and how Vape said that Dilirius could be coming to Hempwards to find and kill Hairy.

"Dilirius Bake was your father's best friend?" asked Herbonme. "And then he helped Whats-his-face to kill your parents?"

"There's a video of some kind," explained Hairy, tears growing in his eyes. "It shows him starting the fire that burned down my parents' house. It happened while Officer Pasdepot was there."

Hairy ignored the gasps from Herbonme and Gon, which happened whenever he said Pasdepot's name out loud. "I wonder what Hogride was thinking in giving me this computer thing?" he said, taking off his glasses and wiping his eyes. "What am I supposed to do with it?"

"Well, I know what I'd do with it!" said Gon.

They decided that Hairy needed to talk to Hogride before using the Eyepalm again, but Hairy's schedule was so full that he knew he'd have no chance to get out to Hogride's cabin before a few days had passed.



Word of Hairy's amazing lungs spread quickly through the school, and he became even more of a celebrity than ever before. But this didn't make his life any easier, as he didn't like being the centre of attention, and all the adulation he received from his Growindor housemates was more than made up for by the snide and cruel remarks from the Snytcherins.

Hairy had been dreading his next Extractions class, and as he had expected, Professor Vape tormented him even more than usual. Vape demanded that Hairy answer all of the hardest questions, while fawning over Narco's every move. But Hairy was relieved that Vape

didn't mention their late-night encounter during class.

It was five days until Hairy, Gon and Herbonme all had an afternoon free of other obligations, and were able to walk down to Hogride's cabin for a quick afternoon visit between classes.

They saw Hogride outside his cabin as they approached. He was squatting down next to the chassis of an exotic motorcycle, surrounded by the many parts of a disassembled engine. Hogride waved hello with a rotor in his hand as he saw the trio coming closer.

"Oy, 'airy, Gon, 'erbonme," said Hogride, standing up and wiping his oil-covered hands on his heavy hemp denim overalls. "I'm jus' workin' on one o' me bikes 'ere. I've just got me a new two-stage Wankel engine, which I am convertin' ta take hemp biodiesel. It's blazin' fast, but I've been havin' a bit o' trouble with the seals."

"Looks like fun," said Gon sarcastically, eyeing the incredible assortment of tiny oil-covered parts spread out in the grass around Hogride.

"'airy," said Hogride, clapping his meaty, stained hand on Hairy's shoulder. "Congratulations on yer Qannabbi win. I heard all about it. Yeh've got lungs jus like yer Da!"

"Thanks," said Hairy.

Hogride leaned in close to Hairy as the four of them walked along the path from the disassembled motorcycle to Hogride's cabin.

"Did yeh get tha gift I left fer yeh?" Hogride whispered gruffly in Hairy's ear.

"Yeah," said Hairy. "I wanted to ask you about that. But you don't need to whisper, I already told Gon and Herbonme."

"Well, 'airy, I s'pose that's alright," replied Hogride in his normal voice. "But yeh can't tell any Professors about what I gave yeh. Yer not supposed to 'ave stuff like tha until yer a wee bit older."

"But why... what am I supposed to do with it?" asked Hairy following Hogride through his cabin door.

"Huh?" asked Hogride, sounding confused. "Just enjoy, an 'ave some fun. Mebbe share with these two if they like," he added, gesturing at Gon and Herbonme.

"Vape almost confiscated it," said Hairy. "I was using it late at night, and Vape caught me in one of the corridors. Professor Splifpassie saved me."

"Oy, tha's too bad 'airy," said Hogride, turning on his kitchen tap with his elbow and starting to wash his oily hands in the sink. "I'm sorry fer gettin yeh inta trouble."

"Vape has it in for me anyways," said Hairy, raising his voice to be heard over the rushing water. "I wish I had been more careful. Was it really my Dad's?"

"Eh?" said Hogride, distracted with scrubbing under his nails. "Oh, I smoked many blunts with yer Da, late

at night, out on the grounds.” Hogride sighed, his eyes misting over. “‘e was a good man, an’ a real talent at the Qannabbi Table. Yeh have many o’ his best qualities, ‘airy.”

“But... how did you get it?” asked Hairy.

“Oy, I make ‘em ‘ere,” said Hogride, rubbing his hands on a towel.

“You made it?” asked Gon, surprised.

“Yeh, sure. They’s not so ‘ard ta spin up. But I made that batch a long time ago.”

“Hey, what’s the deal with Fluffy?” interrupted Herbonme.

“Why, Fluffy is a gentle li’l pet, a sweet wee doggie,” said Hogride happily. “But ‘ow did yeh know about Fluffy?”

“We noticed the name on the spray bottle of pee that you used last week,” said Herbonme quickly. “And there’s a bowl with ‘Fluffy’ written on it right there in the corner.”

“Well tha’s a bit o’ a secret,” said Hogride, sitting down and then clearing a space on the crowded kitchen tabletop. As he pushed aside a pile of plates, cups and filled ashtrays, a stack of papers spilled from a leather folder and fell to floor.

“What’s this Hogride?” asked Herbonme, picking up some of the papers and holding them up to take a look. “Nicholas Flamel, Christian Rosenkreutz, what’s this list of names and dates?”

“Yer nots’posed ta see tha’!” said Hogride, snatching the papers out of her hand and shoving them back into the leather binder. Hairy recognized it as the same one he had taken from Duinthadope’s vault at Greengolds.

“That’s a neat binder,” said Gon. “What’s that on the front?” he asked, pointing to a symbol embossed into the leather. It was a fleur-de-lis rising from a sort of hollow diamond, wrapped in a figure eight.

“Never yeh mind!” said Hogride, his cheeks flushing as he furiously repacked the binder. “Tha’s summat I’m workin’ on fer Duinthadope.”

“OK. Sorry for asking,” said Herbonme.

“I’m sorry fer gettin’ upset,” said Hogride, balancing the binder on top of the plates and ashtrays. “It’s jus’ tha’ I gotta be more careful, this is importan’ stuff.”

Hogride took a deep breath, then picked a tin box out of the pile on the table, and opened it in front of himself. “Anyways,” he said, clearing his throat. “One o’ the professors asked ta borrow Fluffy fer a while. She’s a sweet an’ gentle beast, but she don’t take well ta strangers, an’ she makes a very convincin’ guard dog.” Hogride chuckled to himself and lifted some marijuana buds out of the box, along with some whole tobacco leaves and scissors. “I ‘adda give Splifpassie a whole box o’ tha Scooby Snacks jus’ so he could lead Fluffy

outta ‘ere,” he muttered.

Gon tugged on Hairy’s sleeve and pointed surreptitiously at the pile of stuff sitting on Hogride’s kitchen sink. Half-hidden among cans of lighter fluid, a cracked plastic bong, kitchen utensils, mechanic tools and dozens of unwashed mugs, Hairy could see a cookie tin labeled with a piece of masking tape which had SCOOBY SNAX written upon it.

“I’ve got ta get tha bike workin’ again soon,” sighed Hogride, breaking up some buds and spreading them into a tobacco leaf. “I need ta head off tomorrow mornin’. I’ve been given a mission. Special mission fer Duinthadope.” Hogride seemed to swell with pride.

“A mission?” asked Gon, edging back towards the kitchen sink.

“Yeh,” said Hogride, wrapping the buds carefully in layer upon layer of tobacco leaves. “I can’t say too much of course, but I’ve been asked ta take care of summat important.” Hogride nodded towards the leather binder. “Duinthadope is worried about summat, and I need ta travel, an’ fast! I’ve gotta leave tomorrow, an’ so I am glad that yeh came ta visit me today. But I’ve got a lot of work ta do on that bike today too.”

Hogride finally finished rolling up his huge custom-made blunt. He slid it between his lips to give it a final seal, then pulled out his death’s head Zippo lighter and sparked it into flame. With a few quick puffs, the blunt was going strong and filling the cabin with heavy smoke.

“Whooo!” said Herbonme, fanning the smoke away from her face. “Cannabis is one thing, but I just can’t take that tobacco!” She stood and went to open a window and let in some fresh air.

“Sorry ‘erbonme!” sighed Hogride, fanning the smoke in front of him with his large hand, and spreading it further into the room. “So I guess yeh won’t be sharin’ in ‘airy’s gift.”

“No, I’m not,” replied Herbonme sternly. “I think it’s dangerous and irresponsible. Duinthadope wouldn’t approve.”

“Aye,” said Hogride, taking another huge puff from his blunt, and then stubbing it out onto a nearby plate. “I think yer might be right abou’ that. He always says that it’s best ta stick with only one weed.”

“Hey Hogride, it’s ok,” said Gon suddenly. “We should probably be heading back to class.”

“Yeh, I’d better get back ta work. Tha Master Head wants this stuff out of ‘ere until we figure out who tha spy is!”

“Spy?” asked Herbonme, Gon and Hairy in unison.

“Ach!” spat Hogride, rising suddenly and grabbing his stubbed-out blunt from the plate. A flush was rising on his cheeks. “I’ve said too much as it is. I ‘ate ta be

rude lads, an' I truly wish we had more time ta sit an' chat, but I gotta finish workin' on tha bike so I can zoom outta here tomorrow mornin'. Jus' fergit abou' anythin' I said."

As the trio walked away from the cabin, Gon nudged Hairy. "Hey 'airy, would yeh like a snack?" he said, imitating Hogride's rough accent.

Hairy looked over, confused, and then a smile dawned on his face as he saw what Gon was holding in his hand. Hairy took some of the Scooby Snacks and put them into his pocket.

"You never know when you might run into that 'sweet an' gentle beast' again!" said Gon, grinning.



That evening, the trio were once again sitting in the Growindor common room. Hairy had decided to break out some more of his dad's bubble hash, so they were smoking delicious bowls of Sweet Tooth x Plumberry (73 microns. 4 stars. Exhilarating full-spectrum high. Red wine overtones and sweet plum taste.)

"Hogride was acting a bit strange, wasn't he?" asked Gon, suppressing a cough and exhaling a plume of sweet smoke,

"What was all that about the secret mission for Duinthadope?" asked Herbonme. "Do you think it has something to do with Dilirius Bake?"

"I don't know," said Hairy. "And what was with that weird binder and all those papers?"

"And what about the spy in the school?" said Gon. "I bet anything that if someone's spying, it's Vape."

Herbonme opened her notebook and started writing furiously.

"What are you doing?" asked Gon, looking over her shoulder.

"I memorized those papers that Hogride dropped," said Herbonme. "I wanted to write it all down before I forget."

"You memorized them?" said Gon, incredulously. "How did you do that?"

"Shush," said Herbonme, writing quietly for another minute. Finally she stopped, and then slid the paper across the table for the other two to see.

"Here you go," she said proudly. "This is exactly what was on those papers."

POTTERY OF SION

CAPTAINS OF THE CHALICE

Nicholas Flamel 1398 – 1410

Christian Rosenkreutz 1410 – 1484

Leonardo da Vinci 1484 – 1519

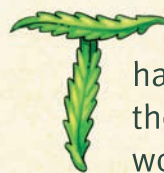
<i>Paracelsus</i>	1519 – 1541
<i>Francois Rabelais</i>	1541 – 1553
<i>John Dee</i>	1553 – 1577
<i>Heinrich Khunrath</i>	1577 – 1605
<i>William Shakespeare</i>	1605 – 1616
<i>Louis Hebert</i>	1616 – 1627
<i>Nicholas Culpeper</i>	1627 – 1654
<i>John Jacob Berlu</i>	1654 – 1710
<i>Charles Radclyffe</i>	1710 – 1746
<i>John Martyn</i>	1746 – 1768
<i>Alessandro Cagliostro</i>	1768 – 1789
<i>Adam Weishaupt</i>	1789 – 1830
<i>Alexandre Dumas</i>	1830 – 1870
<i>Victor Hugo</i>	1870 – 1885
<i>Fulcanelli</i>	1885 – 1928
<i>Richard Buckley</i>	1928 – 1960
<i>Carl Sagan</i>	1960 – 1996
<i>Alwaze Duinthadope</i>	1996 – present

"That's pretty mysterious!" said Hairy. "I wonder what it means?"

"I don't know," said Herbonme, with a twinkle in her eye. "But I'm going to find out."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Deathly Hallway



Thanks to Hairy, Growindor had won their opening Qannabbi match. They won their next three games as well, beating Snytcherin and Puffintuff, and then defeating the Rastalaws in a second game. Each of these victories was much easier on Hairy than the first, and his amazing lungs gave the Growindors the edge they needed to keep their team undefeated.

The Growindor students were thrilled with Hairy's skill at Qannabbi, while most of the Puffintuff and Rastalaw students had a good-natured admiration for his abilities. Only the Snytcherin students seemed to resent Hairy, and Narco often proclaimed that it was the superior Nimbus 4200 vaporizer, and not Hairy, which was responsible for Growindor's winning streak.

The Qannabbi season went from April 21 to August 25, during which time there was an interhouse Qannabbi match every weekend. Each House played each other House three times, so each House team played nine

games over the 18 week season. At the end of the season, the top two teams played against each other to claim the coveted Hempwards Qannabbi Bowl.

Hairy didn't use the Eyepalm at all for a few weeks. He knew that spying on his classmates was wrong, and after his first misadventure, going for late night expeditions just didn't seem like such a good idea. Besides, along with endless Qannabbi practice, he was completely swamped with classes and schoolwork.

In Hempology, Professor LaChanvrette had moved on to teaching about hemp-based plastics, parafins and solvents. Hairy was always distracted by LaChanvrette's complex layered outfits and elaborately tall hairdos, and usually found himself getting confused between hydrocarbons and carbohydrates. But he knew they could both be used to make all the same stuff, so he wasn't sure why it mattered so much, which was which.

In Medicinal Studies, Professor Poultrice was beginning a long section on cannabis and the brain.

"Unlike alcohol, opiates and nicotine, all of which inhibit the growth of new cells in the hippocampus," said Poultrice, surveying the class, "cannabis spurs the brain to grow, producing new cells which act to improve memory and fight mood disorders. Cannabinoids also prevent many neurodegenerative processes, such as those associated with Alzheimer's."

Poultrice paused dramatically before continuing. "Cannabis extracts can also destroy brain tumors, including malignant gliomas untreatable by any other means. Plus, cannabinoids can provide protection against brain damage from head trauma, nerve gas, suffocation and strokes. We will be studying these processes in detail."

Sitting in front of Hairy was Puffintuff student Heddy Tokersson, who was scribbling madly in his notebook. Hairy thought that Heddy was taking notes, but then chuckled as he glanced over Heddy's shoulder and saw that he had been sketching cartoons which showed various strange things popping out from beneath Poultrice's turban.

Professor Sprout's classes on Gardening were also fun for Hairy. Each of the students had a plant growing in the marijuana garden at the Hempwards Greenhouse. Some of the students had brought seeds or cuttings from their home, while others had been given cuttings from the Hempwards House Plants.

Hairy's spindly plant had seemed to be a slow grower at first, taking a few weeks to catch up with the other students' plants. But by the middle of May, Hairy's

plant was already four feet high, and was showing much more vigor.

Along with explaining the basics of nutrients, soil types and light cycles, Sprout had been outlining the differences between the many strains of marijuana. It was complicated, and Hairy kept getting mixed up between phenotype and genotype. But he had no problem remembering Indica and Sativa, and he was positive that his plant was a Sativa.

"Cannabis Sativa refers to varieties of cannabis which typically grow closer to the equator," Sprout had explained, using Hairy's plant as an example. "They have a longer growing season, and they can grow into very tall plants. In industrial use, Sativa varieties are generally best for producing fibers and biomass, because they grow so tall in just one season – from twelve to twenty-four feet high.

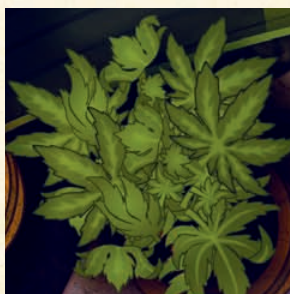
"Indica strains typically grow at more northern latitudes," continued Sprout, moving along to a shorter plant for comparison. "Indicas have a shorter growing season than Sativas. With their short, stocky structure and concentration of buds, Indica varieties are best suited for commercial marijuana production indoors, and in industrial use they are best for producing seeds.

"Both varieties can produce high-potency buds for medicinal and spiritual use," continued Sprout. "Typically, the effects of Indica buds are more body-oriented, with qualities of muscle relaxation, pain relief, and appetite stimulation. The Sativa varieties produce longer, wispiest buds. When smoked, Sativa strains are associated with an invigorating, cerebral high, accenting creativity, mental clarity and acuity.

"The increased height and longer growing season of the Sativas makes them unpopular for most indoor grow rooms," concluded Sprout. "But outdoors, in a climate with a long growing season, Sativa strains are wonderful to grow."

Extractions was still a very unpleasant class for Hairy. Professor Vape consistently targeted Hairy for scorn while heaping praise upon his protégé Narco. They had been covering sieve-based extraction methods, including dry and wet sieves, the importance of understanding micron sizes, and the different techniques suitable for both small and large-scale operations.

Vape paused before the end of the last class in May, asking the students to remain seated so he could make an announcement. "It has come to my attention that certain items have been going missing from my personal storerooms," intoned Vape, his eyes squarely



fixed upon Hairy. "These items include some of my strongest ointments and lotions, which are used to induce intense shamanic experiences, or at lower doses for treating severe skin conditions and burns."

Vape paused, and continued to stare at Hairy so intently that he got goose bumps and began to flush red in the face, even though he didn't know who had been stealing from Vape's storeroom. None of the students spoke.

"My salves are not for you kids to be playing around with and anointing yourselves!" yelled Vape suddenly, slamming his hand onto his desk. "Stealing from a Professor is an expellable offence, and if I catch the student or students who have been taking these items, I will ensure that they receive the maximum punishment."

Vape's eyes flicked over to Narco and the Snytcherins sitting together in a cluster. "Further, any student who wishes to come forward to me with information about the thief will receive my personal gratitude. Of course, all tips will be treated with full confidentiality."

That afternoon, Hairy, Gon and Herbonme sat in the Growindor Common room, working on their lessons and once again smoking bowls of Hairy's potent bubble hash.

"Vape's probably just misplacing things," said Gon suddenly, looking up from his essay on the history of medicinal cannabis. "Maybe he's been hanging out with Splifpassie too much. Besides, he always blames you for everything. He should get over it."

"Yeah," said Hairy, with mock indignation. "As if I'm the type of person who would ever go sneaking around where I don't belong!"

Herbonme and Gon chuckled. Herbonme slammed shut her textbook and started packing up her things.

"Whereareyougoing?" asked Gon. "Our Cannatheism class is still an hour away."

"There's an open lecture on Acclimatization of Cannabis Phenotypes by guest speaker Red-Eye Majoun," said Herbonme, heading out the door. "It's starting in a few minutes. You two can come if you like, but I didn't think you'd be interested."

"You were right," said Gon and Hairy together. "Have fun," added Gon, as Herbonme left the room. "See you later this afternoon."

"Hairy..." said Gon, after a few minutes of silent work had passed by. "Do you think we could check out the Eyepalm?"

"I don't know," said Hairy. "Last time it led to trouble."

"We don't need to do anything against the rules," said Gon, putting down his pencil. "It's not after curfew, so we're not actually breaking any rules if we go wan-

dering around. Maybe you could just show me a secret passageway or something?"

"Okay," said Hairy, letting himself be convinced. "Sure. Let's go."

They went to the dormitory and then spent a few minutes behind the curtains around Hairy's bed, using the Eyepalm to see through various cameras and then looking at some of the maps.

"There's one," said Hairy, pointing to a line on the map. "That's a secret passageway. I went down it once before. It's not too far from here."

"Let's go!" said Gon.

Together they headed down the hallway and to the sculpture of George Washington. Hairy looked around to make sure no-one was coming, then gripped Washington's left hand and gave it a twist. A door slid open behind the sculpture with a soft click, and Gon and Hairy slipped through.

"This is cool!" said Gon excitedly as they made their way down the secret passage.

"Yeah," replied Hairy, pushing buttons on the Eyepalm. "This will take us about halfway to the Puffintuff common room. From there we can go down another corridor, and I think we can get to another secret passage that has a viewpoint overlooking the Qannabbi hall. I'm pretty sure the Rastalaws are practicing today, maybe we can sneak a peak."

"You just want to scope out Lionah," said Gon, grinning.

"I do not!" replied Hairy firmly, blushing furiously.

"Yeah, sure!" chuckled Gon.

They reached the end of the passage, and Hairy checked the cameras with the Eyepalm before pushing open the secret door. They stood behind the statue of Louis Armstrong, Gon looking at the Eyepalm over Hairy's shoulder.

"What's that purple dot?" asked Gon, pointing at the screen.

"That must have just turned on," said Hairy. "I don't know, I've never seen it before. It's not too far from here. Hey, there's an orange dot nearby too, see there? Let me check the cameras."

Hairy flicked some switches and cycled through a series of camera views.

"I can't find any cameras showing that corridor," he said with frustration. "But it's not too far away, why don't we go and have a look?"

They headed down the corridor, Hairy scanning the cameras ahead with the Eyepalm as they went. "Both dots are gone now," he said. "But let's keep going. Hey, wait a second, what's that?"

Hairy stopped, staring at the Eyepalm. "Around the corner!" he called out suddenly, breaking into a run. "I

think he's dead!"

Gon followed Hairy in a run around the corner, and then they both skidded to a halt halfway down the corridor, shocked by the sight before them.

Puffintuff student Justin Thyme-Fertokin was laying on the floor, rigid and cold, a look of shock frozen on his face, his eyes staring blankly at the ceiling. And that wasn't all. Further down the corridor, just before it turned, Hairy saw another figure, also prone. He went closer and saw that it was Hempwards caretaker, Agros Roach, twitching and mumbling, his eyes rolled back into his head. There was a feathered dart sticking out of his neck.

"What have you done now, Pothead?" said a familiar voice. Hairy and Gon both looked up to see Professor Vape looming over them, pointing a long finger right into Hairy's face. "This time I've got you!"

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Office of the Master Head



– I didn't do this!" stuttered Hairy indignantly. "I just found them like this!"

"Young man, you had best be still and say nothing," said Professor Vape, turning from Hairy and Gon and kneeling down next to Agros Roach and Justin Thyme-Fertokin. He examined them quickly, pulled a feathered dart from Agros' neck, and then turned back to Hairy.

"What did you do to them?" asked Vape, sniffing the dart he held in his hand. "They are alive, but heavily drugged. What did you dose them with? Something you stole from my storeroom?"

"I didn't do anything!" said Hairy firmly. "And I never stole anything either!"

"We'll see about that!" said Vape, reaching under his robes to pull out a small electronic device, and then pushing a few buttons. "I've called the nurse and alerted the professors. You two don't move a muscle!"

Vape adjusted the bodies of Justin and Agros, ensuring they were able to breathe while Hairy and Gon stood nervously waiting. After a few minutes, Nurse Poppy came running down the corridor, followed by Professor McGanjagal, a dozen curious students, and then Duinthadope coming along behind, his long beard flopping as he jogged down the corridor. Splifpassie

approached from the opposite direction.

Vape stood to block the corridor so the students couldn't get too close to the prone bodies of Agros and Justin. "Stay back," he said ominously, letting only the Nurse and the Professors get by.

"I found them here, just moments ago!" said Vape imperiously, turning to address Duinthadope. "Clearly these two had something to do with it," he added, pointing at Hairy and Gon. "This isn't the first time I've caught Pothead skulking around and getting up to no good!"

A foursome of older students pushed through the crowd, carrying stretchers. Nurse Poppy efficiently guided them in rolling Justin and Agros onto the taut hemp fabric, and then they trotted off down the corridor, heading to the infirmary.

"I don't know anything about this!" pleaded Hairy, looking up at Duinthadope earnestly. "We were just wandering around and we found them like this!"

"I will speak to you both in my office," said Duinthadope, "but separately. Hairy, you will proceed to my office now and wait for me there. Gon, you will wait in the Growindor common room, and come to my office at quarter past 4:20 Madrid time."

"Yes sir," said Hairy and Gon in unison, heading down the hall through a throng of gawking students, then splitting up to go where Duinthadope had instructed.

Hairy made his way through the many hallways, feeling sad and embarrassed that even Duinthadope seemed to think he was responsible for what had happened to Justin and Agros. The castle seemed cold and draftier than usual, a chill ran through Hairy as he wondered what would happen. Would Duinthadope expel him, and maybe Gon too?

Finally Hairy reached the winding stairwell that lead up to the Master Head's office. He trudged slowly up the steps, his legs beginning to ache just as he reached the top. Two massive doors awaited him, emblazoned with a huge cannabis leaf with 13 tips. The leaf split in two as Hairy pulled the heavy doors open, releasing clouds of sweet-smelling smoke from the chamber within.

Hairy peered through the doors and into Duinthadope's large, dimly lit, cloud-filled office. It took his eyes a few moments to adjust to the flickering light, and then an eclectic collection of objects emerged from the gloom, which Hairy saw filled almost every available space as he slowly walked inside. The smoke came from dozens of incense cones that sat on small silver trays all around the room, giving off thin streams of grey as they smoldered in the gloom.

In the centre of the office there was a huge desk which Hairy just knew was made from hemp, and it was crowded with sheaves of colored papers, ashtrays

full of half-smoked joints, bowls of colorful candies, an assortment of wooden toys, tops, playing cards, spilled stacks of CD's, two large goblets with intricate designs, a small skull with an eye patch, a flat-screen iMac covered with stickers, several curious silver instruments which were whirring and emitting little puffs of smoke, a mound of strangely shaped dice, and a small glass box filled with tiny painted figurines of elves and dwarves bearing weapons and wands.

Next to the desk was Duinthadope's ceremonial five-foot glass tube bong, resting on its ornate hand-carved stand. Beside it was a pillar holding an ashtray in the shape of a dragon's head, its jaws spread wide.

Stretching the length of the wall behind the desk was a pair of wide shelves. The topmost shelf held dozens of sealed mason jars, each containing carefully preserved cannabis buds, their crystals glinting in the light. Below was a shelf crammed with elaborate hand-blown glass pipes and bongs, their swirling colors glittering in the shifting light of the many lava lamps which sat between them, glowing blobs rising and dropping, dividing and rejoining in rhythmic, hypnotic patterns. Below the shelves, lit candles flickered on a brass stand resembling a mix between a menorah and a pot leaf with seven flaming tips.

On another wall was a bookshelf full of dusty leather bound volumes. Hairy scanned a few of the titles: *Dungeons & Dragons Player's Handbook* by Gary Gygax, *Gargantua & Pantagruel* by Alcofribas Nasier, *The Alchemical Texts of Ibn Sina*. On one shelf sat a stack of board games in colorful boxes, with names like Growopoly, Tokelero and Dealer McDope. Past the bookshelf was a tall mirror on a stand, stretching from the floor to far above Hairy's head, and next to that was a wooden armoire, ornately carved to depict the sowing and harvest of a huge hemp field. Beside the armoire sat the Picking Pot on a small tripod, and once again Hairy was reminded that he truly belonged in the Snytcherins, with Narco and his gang, because he had lied about drawing the Snytcherin ticket from the pot.

A giant green parrot slept with its head under a multi-colored wing, resting on its perch in a corner. Below it was a terrarium where a fat lizard lay lounging among a variety of exotic cacti. On the wall next to the bird was a series of graphs and charts showing the evolutionary development of cannabis, and next to that was a stand holding a large feathered mask, from which hung dozens of laminated event passes, still attached to their neckbands. They were all decorated with beautiful art and Hairy read some of them to himself: Amsterdam Cannabis Cup, Vancouver Tokers' Bowl, Nimbin Mardi Grass, Dordrecht Weed Cup, Swiss CannaTrade, Seattle Hempfest.

Above the lamps and bookshelves, and upon any wall space that was not otherwise being used, hung portraits of past Hempwards Master Heads. Hairy walked to the closest one at his height, and saw a yellowed photograph of a dour-looking man with broad mutton chop sideburns. Looking carefully, Hairy could see the tips of three fat joints sticking out from under the band which went around his high Victorian top hat. A little brass plaque at the base of the frame said "Sir John Russell Reynolds – Master Head 1879-1886."

Next to the portrait was a framed circular engraving, titled "The First Stage of the Great Work." It showed a man kneeling inside an open tent, with a nearby censor billowing out smoke. Hairy's eye was drawn to examine a strange seven-pointed chandelier near the centre of the image, but then he jumped as he suddenly saw Duinthadope's reflection in the glass and realized that the Master Head was standing right behind him.

"Good afternoon Hairy," said Duinthadope, as Hairy turned to face him. "Thank you for coming to my office."

Duinthadope smiled warmly and walked behind the desk, sitting down in a large chair whose high back was carved into the shape of a 13-pointed cannabis leaf.

"Sit down Hairy," said Duinthadope gently.

Hairy sat down, feeling his weight sink in to the plush seat.

"Hairy, I know that you didn't do anything to Justin or Caretaker Roach. But there are things going on at this school that concern you. It is only right that I provide you with some information."

Duinthadope paused.

"Okay," said Hairy, feeling great relief that he was not going to be blamed, but still apprehensive at this unexpected turn in the conversation. "What things?"

Without speaking, Duinthadope opened a drawer in his desk and pulled out an oversized golden cigarette case. He popped it open and removed a large joint, tossing it into his mouth and lighting it in one smooth motion. He inhaled deeply, and then passed it silently to Hairy.

Hairy took the joint with honor, knowing that this was part of Duinthadope's personal stash. He inhaled, tasting overtones of dark chocolate and spearmint in the rich, thick smoke. The pot was strong; Hairy felt it hit him instantly, cutting through all the other joints he had smoked that day and taking him to another level of awareness. His palms itched.

"Hairy, I knew your parents," intoned Duinthadope. "I was a Professor here when Jay and Mary-Jane were students. Dilirius Bake was a student then too. Your father and Bake were very close, and along with another student they were well known to all of us at



Hempwards. The three of them spent a great deal of time together getting into mischief and driving us professors to distraction.

"But a few years later, Bake betrayed your parents. Your father had video cameras in his home grow-room, and we recovered video footage of Bake setting off the fire that burned down your childhood home and killed your parents."

Duinthadope paused as Hairy passed back the joint, exhaling clouds of smoke from his nose and mouth. Duinthadope took a deep inhalation before continuing to speak.

"Perhaps I am getting ahead of myself. There are many things you do not know. Us Weedsters are still recovering from a very dark time. In the years before your birth, Hairy, many Weedsters were incarcerated or killed due to a man known only as Officer Pasdepot. So great was the terror, that many Weedsters still do not wish to speak his name out loud to this day.

"Pasdepot knew many of our secrets, some believe that he may have been a student here himself, but no-one knows for sure who he is or where he came from. His first victim was the boy who was Dilirius and your father's friend, Ratsoff. He was murdered soon after they graduated and his body was never recovered. All that was found was... well... anyways, that was not the last we heard from Pasdepot."

Duinthadope took another small puff, then passed the joint to Hairy as he continued to speak.

"For three long years, Weedsters suffered from his persecution. Oh, we have always faced oppression from Squares who do not understand our ways, but this was different. Pasdepot knew so much, and he struck with vengeance and violence. Sadder still, many Weedsters followed him, and trust became a scarce commodity indeed.

"The terrible thing is that Pasdepot is not against marijuana," sighed Duinthadope, shaking his head. "Oh no, we have numerous accounts of him being a marijuana user himself. But he was opposed to our work to spread the word of marijuana.

"You see Hairy, we have been working for many, many years, through various front organizations, to legalize marijuana, to end the war and teach Squares that they have no reason to fear us. Many of us dream that one day, Squares and Weedsters can live in peace, and that we can share all the wonderful gifts of our sacred plant with the world. But some Weedsters oppose this. They like things the way they are, with marijuana and the other sacred herbs banned by the world's governments. They want to keep the gifts of marijuana to themselves, and only to those who can afford their high prices. That's why they are called the

Profit Eaters. Most of them flocked to Pasdepot, and he became their leader.

"We don't know exactly when or even how Bake was turned against us, when he first became a spy. But he was a traitor to Hempwards. He was in league with Officer Pasdepot, probably feeding him inside information on other Weedsters, the better to hunt us down. After Bake helped Pasdepot kill your parents, he was captured by the Vatican."

"The Vatican?" asked Hairy, his mind reeling from both Duinthadope's potent weed and his strange story.

"Yes Hairy, the Catholic Church." Duinthadope rose from behind his chair and walked to his bookshelf, running his fingers along the spines of the books as he spoke. "The relationship between Hempwards and the church has been long and intertwined. We possess... certain information... that could be very damaging to the Catholic Church. Over the centuries, many Popes have long sought to destroy Hempwards and the other Weedster schools."

Duinthadope turned to Hairy and plucked the half-smoked joint from out of his immobile hand. He stood in front of Hairy, leaned back against his desk, and took another toke before continuing.

"Yet the Church also shares a common interest with us, in keeping Hempwards hidden from the public. We fear publicity because our enemies would seek to destroy us if they could find us, and the Church fears giving us publicity because then our secrets would be at risk of revelation.

"Many believe that Officer Pasdepot was working hand in glove with the Catholic Church, that his ultimate goal was to destroy us from within. Of course the Pope and College of Bishops denied any involvement with him, and their agents within the police forces captured Bake immediately after the fire that killed your parents.

"The Church even admitted that Bake had been an agent of theirs, but they claimed that he was only supposed to be spying, and that he was not authorized to start fires or hurt anyone. The Pope's agents contacted me to apologize, and said that their people would 'take care of him.' Our spies confirmed that they had indeed locked up Bake, that he was being questioned and possibly tortured in the Vatican dungeons.

"Bake recently escaped from the Vatican prison, no-one knows exactly how, as it has never been done before. Some people were worried that he might return to Hempwards, to find you and finish the job that he and Pasdepot started."

"Why me?" asked Hairy. "Why my parents? What did we do?"

"It's nothing you did Hairy," said Duinthadope soothingly, inhaling again on what was left of the joint. "It's who you are, and what you represent. Some people believe that you are very important. Because of the circumstances of your birth, you have become a powerful symbol. If Bake is hiding within the castle, then this attack on Agros and Justin might have happened because they discovered him. Perhaps he was waiting to ambush you and they spoiled his plan. We don't know for sure. And frankly, Bake knows this castle better than anyone, including myself.

"Hairy, we'll do our best to keep you safe," continued the Master Head, looking Hairy in the eye." We have posted guards and we are all on alert. But you have to cooperate with me, and with the other professors here. I know it can be hard to believe, but even Professor Vape has your best interests at heart."

"Professor Vape hates me," said Hairy glumly.

Surprisingly, Duinthadope smiled. "He doesn't hate you my boy. But long ago, your father did something, which Vape could never forgive. Your father saved his life. Funny, the way people's minds work, isn't it? Professor Vape couldn't bear being in your father's debt."

Duinthadope flicked the tiny roach into the dragon's mouth, and blew a series of interlocking smoke rings into the air. Hairy sensed that their conversation was at a close, and stood up.

"I hear that your plant is growing very well," said Duinthadope, walking Hairy to his office door. "Professor Sprout says that it is a most remarkable specimen. Where did you get the seed?"

"I don't know sir, it was always with me. I found it in my things one day. I think it came from my parents."

"Fascinating," said Duinthadope, looking off in the distance for a moment, his glasses glinting in the light of the lava lamps and the candles. Then he took Hairy's hand in his and gave it a firm shake, looking the boy in the eye.

"We will speak again," said the Master Head, closing the doors behind Hairy.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Growing Mysteries



uinthadope held a brief emergency assembly in the Great Hall later that evening. Unlike the other, more

festive occasions, this time there was no special foods, and the silver bowls were only half-filled with buds.

The Master Head was more somber than the students had ever seen him. He told the school that Nurse Poppy's examination showed that Agros and Justin had probably been attacked and drugged into unconsciousness by one or more unknown assailants. He said that it was possible that there was an unwelcome guest hiding in the school, but that the professors and staff were doing their best to catch the guilty culprits and keep Hempwards safe.

"Until this matter is resolved," concluded Duinthadope sadly, "all students must stay in groups of three or more when in the hallways. Also, the curfew is being pulled back a half-hour earlier each evening, to 4:20 Darwin time. Finally, any student who sees anything unusual should immediately inform a professor. That is all."

Agros and Justin recovered and were back to normal after a few days, but the speculation about who had dosed them seemed like it would never end. Neither had any memory of what had happened, or even of being attacked at all. Agros said that he was merely doing his usual afternoon rounds and suddenly he became dizzy and passed out. Justin's story was similar, he said he had been looking for the third-floor toilets because there was a plumbing problem and the one he usually used was closed.

Rumors swirled through the school like smoke through a bong. Some students believed that Agros and Justin had stumbled across someone waiting to ambush Hairy, and that they had suffered the attack meant for him. The story being promoted by Narco and the Snytcherins was that Hairy and Gon had actually been the attackers, and that they had dosed Agros and Justin with something they had stolen from Vape's storeroom.

"That Hairy Pothead is a dangerous person to be near," Narco sneered loudly and often, to anyone who would listen. "Either he's an attacker or a target, and either way I sure wouldn't want to be sleeping in the same room as that fellow!"

A few days after the event, Hairy discovered that Narco knew more about the situation than Hairy had expected. As Hairy was walking down the corridor, he saw Narco standing in the middle of a circle of Puffintuffs and Rastalaws, expounding his views about the situation.

"My dad, Lucelips, is a director of Hempwards," said Narco loudly, "and he says that the Council of Canabians is going to vote next week on forcing Hairy

out of the school. This is all very secret information, so I shouldn't really talk about it," he continued, loving the attention, "but let's just say that there's some people who would be..." Narco's gaze flicked to Hairy, locking eyes with him for a moment as he passed by, "...deliriously happy to see the Potheads out of Hempwards."

Sadly the Snytcherins weren't the only students spreading rumors. Hairy heard whispers whenever he entered a classroom, and felt the other students' eyes on him wherever he and Gon went.

"This sucks!" said Gon for the tenth time after a particularly grueling Extractions class. "I can't handle the pressure of everyone thinking we're some sort of fiends."

Yet as the days and then weeks passed without further incident, the terrible events began to slowly fade from the collective mind of the students. It was hard to stay nervous or upset as the days grew longer and warmer.

The sun rose a little earlier each day, and as the daylight grew, so did the students' worries about the attack grow smaller, to be replaced by another worry growing steadily larger. Mid-term exams were held during the week of Summer Solstice, the final seven days of June. Most students were busy reviewing their course materials, trying to figure out what was going to be on the exams, and worrying themselves silly over their grades.

Hairy, Gon and Herbonme were all studying hard for their mid-terms, but only Herbonme had a color-coded table which she used to divide up every spare moment of her day into reviewing her course studies.

Hairy had an extra reason to be nervous about the coming midterms; he needed to maintain good grades in order to stay on the Qannabbi team. Failing even one exam would mean that Hairy would be forbidden to play Qannabbi until he had passed a make-up test.

Hairy figured he'd be all right in most of his classes, except for Extractions. He always had trouble keeping up with Vape's complex diagrams and eight-syllable words, plus Vape detested him so much that Hairy knew he would love to have any excuse to flunk Hairy and keep him out of the second half of the Qannabbi season. Growindor had won every game so far, but Snytcherin was at second place in the standings, and without Hairy at the table, the Snytcherins might still have a chance to win the Bowl.

Hairy knew he was doing well in Gardening. His plant was growing fast, outstripping every other plant in the greenhouse. By mid-June his plant was over three times Hairy's height. Also, Hairy finally knew for sure that his plant was female, because Sprout had shown them a method to determine the sex of their plants earlier than normal.

"Normally, cannabis plants only reveal their sex when they begin to flower in the fall," Sprout had explained. "Then they begin to produce either male or female flowers. A discerning eye can tell the difference quite quickly. However, sometimes you want to know the sex of your plant before it begins to flower. In this case, you just take a small cutting and put it under a light cycle, which simulates the shortening days of the fall season. The cutting will soon begin to show some flowers, revealing the sex of the plant."

Sprout had led the class in taking cuttings and then placing them under a separate lighting cycle to induce their flowering. Within days Hairy's plant had been revealed as a female, which gave him a thrill. He was looking forward to harvesting the buds from his plant when it was finally mature.

"I have no idea what strain this is," said Sprout, talking to Hairy after class one sunny June afternoon. "But your plant clearly has some amazing genetics. Cannabis is a fast-growing plant, but I have never seen one growing this quickly before! I am excited to see what comes of it."

Another class where Hairy thought he would get a good grade was Cannatheism. He got along well with Professor Kiseru, and he had enjoyed learning about the seemingly endless list of ways in which cannabis was used in Japanese religious traditions. From the sacred hempen belt of the champion Sumo wrestler, to the pot-leaf pattern commonly found on kimonos, Kiseru showed how cannabis permeated almost every aspect of Japanese culture. He had taken a special glee in showing the class how the Japanese Kanji character for "to rub" is created using the character for "hand" and the one for "cannabis." Kiseru claimed that this meant his Japanese ancestors had been smoking hand-rubbed hash since before they had created their written language.

Hairy's favorite was what Kiseru called the "hemp haikus," a series of beautiful poems about marijuana written by revered Zen masters in the late 18th Century. Hairy wrote one down in his notebook, by Basho the Haiku Master:

*The cannabis, how wonderful it is!
The summer drawing room.
Trees and stones, just as they are.*

*Ah, how glorious!
The young leaves, the green leaves,
Glittering in the sunshine!*

Kiseru's final lesson before mid-terms was devoted to the annual marijuana festivals held at the shrine of

Amaterasu the Sun Goddess, divine ancestor of Japan's Imperial Family.

"The next section will be something very special," said Kiseru, smiling warmly. "After mid-terms, we will finally be leaving Japan and moving on to another region, the Middle East. We will begin a new journey, from India to Israel, to uncover some new perspectives on the so-called greatest story ever told."

As the class was dismissed, Kiseru motioned Hairy to come to his desk.

"Hairy, I'd like to speak with you after class today. You're not in trouble, it's just that there may be some things coming up in the next set of lessons, which... well, it concerns you. I'd like to discuss it with you later."

"I have Toker Etiquette now," said Hairy. "Can I come back later?"

"Yes, of course," said Kiseru. "I'll see you here after you're done with Professor McGanjagal, in about two hours. I have a meeting with the Master Head now anyways."

Toker Etiquette was moving along, they had been studying advanced problems like where to pass a joint in a moving crowd, how to deal with moochers and roach-pickers, and complex rolling techniques including three-paper cones, and the proper application of oils and resins to the rolling paper. Snytcherins still tried to ruin the class for Hairy, but McGanjagal kept a close eye on Narco and wouldn't let him get away with the sort of pranks he played in Extractions.

When Hairy returned to Professor Kiseru's classroom a few hours later, he found the normally calm and composed teacher to be in an agitated mood.

"Hairy, I'm sorry I wasted your time," said Kiseru, packing a small piece of hash into his slender pipe and lighting it up with shaking hands. He took a pair of deep puffs, his jaw clenching the pipe stem firmly.

"What do you mean?" asked Hairy.

Kiseru took another puff, seeming to compose himself before continuing.

"I believe that everyone has the right to know things that concern them," said Kiseru bitterly. "But I have been over-ruled by minds apparently wiser than mine. I wish I could say more, but I am bound by strong oaths. I will not lie to you Hairy, but in this case that means I must keep my silence instead."

"What are you talking about?" asked Hairy in frustration. "Why is everyone always being so mysterious?"

"Hairy," said Kiseru, sighing, "it's no great secret that you are special, that you are the heir to some special things. But us Weedsters are often great lovers of tradition, and there is a tradition of which you are the unwitting heir.

"Weedsters determine the age of full adulthood at 420 months, or 35 years old. At half this age, 210 months, or 17 and a-half years, many secrets can be revealed. That is around the age that most students graduate from Hempwards. But you are considered to be still too young, and I am forbidden to share certain truths with you."

"Does this have something to do with the Pottery of Sion?" asked Hairy suddenly.

Kiseru flinched as if he had been struck.

"Who told you of that?" he hissed. "Do you know of what you speak?"

"No," said Hairy, "I don't really know at all." He paused, but quickly decided to tell Kiseru at least most of the truth, without implicating his friends. "I saw some papers by accident in Hogride's cabin. They said something about the Pottery, and the Captains of the Chalice. There was also a list of people's names and dates, with Duinthadope's name at the end. I don't know what it means, but Hogride was sure upset that I'd seen it."

"Is that all?" asked Kiseru, beginning to calm himself again.

"Yes," said Hairy earnestly. "I swear."

Kiseru relaxed visibly, and then actually chuckled, banging the end of his pipe into an ashtray before refilling it with another small piece of hashish.

"Hairy Pothead, you are cleverer than I had expected," said Kiseru, smiling broadly now. "I am confident that you will figure things out for yourself long before your elders decide to finally reveal the truth to you. However, for now, this conversation is over."

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Mid-term Exams

 Each class at Hempwards had a different sort of mid-term exam. In Hempology, Professor LaChanvrette said their test would be a set of essay questions covering practical aspects of hemp cultivation, analysis of the food, fuel and fiber products that could be produced from hemp, and the impact of hemp on the socio-economic status of different cultures through history.

Toker Etiquette was going to be a practical exam. McGanjagal explained that they would be required to

roll a variety of different joint styles, including the basic cones, cannons and tulips, plus each student had to demonstrate proficiency in at least two of the standard trick joints, such as the Windmill, the Diamond Eye, the Flaming Backflip or the Double Nosecone.

They would also be required to demonstrate the proper use and cleaning of several different kinds of bongs and pipes, and the basics of improvised bong and pipe repair.

"Don't forget to read up on the three best ways to repair a damaged joint," reminded McGanjagal during their last class before midterms. "Also, many of you need to brush up on preparing palatable roach joints!"

In Extractions, Vape told them to expect a lengthy multiple-choice exam, covering every single thing they had studied over the past three months. "Read each question carefully," intoned Vape. "In order to deter guessing, you will be deducted a half point for each answer you get wrong. If you aren't totally sure, don't guess."

Vape said that there would also be a practical section, where they had to show proficiency with dry-sift and ice water extraction techniques, and be able to grade different samples of hash by sight and smell.

Professor Poultrice said that part of their Medicinal exam would test their ability to select which strain of marijuana is best for treating various ailments. They also had to determine when to use various ingestion methods such as tinctures, foods, oils, lotions, poultices, and even suppositories, which always got a giggle from the class.

In Gardening, Professor Sprout said they would be expected to identify different varieties of cannabis from photos of leaves and buds, as well as diagnose various plant pests, fungi and diseases from photographs, and provide written solutions to hypothetical gardening problems.

Professor Kiseru said that the Cannatheism mid-term exam would involve a mix of essay questions and multiple choices. Hairy wasn't worried, he felt he knew the Japanese cannabis history quite well, from prehistoric times to the end of World War II, when US General Douglas MacArthur put cannabis prohibition into the Japanese constitution.

The mid-term exam for Defense Against the Drug Cops was the oddest of them all. Splifpassie stood at the front of the class, wearing his heavy sunglasses and constantly dabbing the sweat from his face as usual. His personal orange gourd sat on his desk before him. "Your final exam will be a little different," he said, giving his usual grimace as if he was suffering some secret pain. "There will be a short written exam, but

there will also be a practical exam which lasts for the whole of mid-term week.

"I have hidden a great many small, golden eggs around this classroom, in the Great Hall and on the school grounds. Your task is to seek them out. Nothing is hidden in any of the forbidden areas of the school. Do not search in any of the other professor's private chambers, nothing has been hidden there."

"Each student must find at least six eggs. The more eggs you find, the higher your grade. Do not share the eggs with your friends, each student must work alone."

Later that evening, Hairy, Gon and Herbonme were sitting together in the Growindor common room, studying for exams. Gon was quizzing Hairy on Extractions, and Herbonme had her nose buried in a book.

"What is the best micron size for the 'work bag' used when making cold water hash?" asked Gon.

"Uh..." replied Hairy slowly. "Seventy-five microns?"

"Nope, it's two hundred and twenty," said Herbonme, without looking up.

"Dammit!" said Hairy. "I'm going to fail Extractions."

"Not if you study hard," said Herbonme.

"Hey, did you guys listen to what Splifpassie said about searching for those eggs?" asked Gon, closing the textbook.

"Yeah," said Hairy. "It's just like Easter, searching for eggs everywhere!"

"But he specifically said not to search any of the other professors private chambers," said Gon. "Maybe that means he wants us to look in his office? He's always telling us to think outside the box..."

"I doubt it," said Hairy. "I think he just wants us to stay out of the private areas."

"I think it's ridiculous!" said Herbonme, throwing down her copy of *The Big Book of Secret Hiding Places*. "We should have a proper exam, and not be fishing around the castle looking for things."

That night, as Hairy was putting on his pajamas behind the thick hemp-velvet curtains of his four-poster bed, he heard his Eyepalm give a soft beep. He picked it up, and saw a blinking orange dot in the bottom corner of the screen. He clicked on it, and the monitor displayed a message.

*I thought this might come in handy.
From a friend.*

- 1) Bubble hash is so named because: (a) bubbles form when it's being made, (b) your head feels like a bubble when you smoke it, (c) it is so pure that it bubbles when heated, (d) it is

HEMPWARDS GREENHOUSE



made using a bubble machine.

- 2) Which is the only cannabinoid found in plants other than cannabis: (a) cannabicyclol, (b) cannabinol, (c) cannabidivanol, (d) cannabichromene
- 3) Which of the following is not a real type of cannabinoid: (a) cannabigerol, (b) cannabidimone, (c) cannabielsoin, (d) cannabicitran
- 4) Under the common dibenzopyran numbering system, the major form of THC is called delta-9-THC. Under the alternate terpene numbering system, this same compound is called (a) delta-1-THC, (b) delta-6-THC, (c) delta-8-THC, (d) delta-11-THC

Hairy scrolled quickly down the list. There was 200 questions, each more complicated than the last. He was looking at the answer code for the Extractions mid-term exam!



A week had passed since Hairy had found the answers for the Extractions mid-term on his Eyepalm, and it had been a very stressful week for all the students in the school. Even the malevolent Narco had seemed subdued and worried. Hairy had spotted him once the library, reading through a stack of textbooks while Finke and Teller sat nearby, looking at pictures in *The Cannabible*. Narco had glanced up, sneered at Hairy, then got back to his studying, too busy even to throw an insult Hairy's way.

But like all things, the exam week finally came to an end. Extractions was the last and worst exam for Growindor, but they still had another day off until the start of second term. Hairy was exhausted after the long week of studying and testing, and the Extractions exam had been especially tiring, but he figured he did pretty well. He knew that without the help of the Eyepalm he would have failed miserably, and even with it he still hadn't been able to remember many of the answers.

Hairy assumed that somehow Hogride had sent him the exam key, and while he felt a little guilty about having the answers in advance, he told himself that he still had to study to memorize them, because he couldn't risk trying to bring the Eyepalm into Vape's classroom. He sure wished that Hogride would return from his secret mission, so he could talk to him again.

Hairy also felt a bit guilty because hadn't told Gon or Herbonme about his secret advantage with the Extractions mid-term. He knew that Herbonme would disapprove, and Gon would have wanted to see the

answers too. He couldn't risk Herbonme turning him in, and he knew that if he and Gon both scored really high on the exam it would seem even more suspicious. Besides, if Hairy failed even one mid-term then he would be off the Qannabbi team, while if Gon failed a class nothing bad would happen, he could just take a make-up exam.

As for Splifpassie's golden eggs, every first-year student in the entire school had been energetically searching them out. Gon had pleaded with Hairy to use the Eyepalm, so they could more easily search within the school, but Hairy had refused. Every time they used the Eyepalm to explore, something bad happened. Gon had been upset, but he seemed to understand. Even without the Eyepalm, he and Gon had managed to find a dozen eggs each, and as far as Hairy was concerned, that was good enough.

Herbonme had a harder time, she had only found six eggs, but she had also mapped out the entire school grounds into a grid system, and was methodically searching each quadrant. Like many students, she was still out now, searching the Entrance Hall, hoping to find some more eggs before curfew began in a few hours.

Even though he could have been relaxing like Hairy, Gon was also out looking for more eggs too. He had said that he didn't think he had done very well in the written portion of the Defense Against the Drug Cops exam, and so he wanted to find a few extra eggs to catch up.

Hairy sat in the Growindor common room, smoking a bowl of bubble hash to celebrate the end of his mid-terms. Only two other students were there, locked in a game of Weed Wars at the other end of the room. He looked out the window, watching clusters of students still randomly searching the expansive Hempwards grounds. His eyes drifted to the acres of hemp stretching off into the distance. The hemp that Hempwards used for food, fuel and fiber was grown outdoors; the high-grade marijuana was grown in greenhouses.

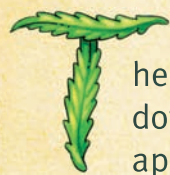
Hairy smiled to himself when he saw the tiny figure of Lionah Judah, surrounded by a circle of her fellow Rastalaws. Then he frowned, and leaned forward while adjusting his glasses to get a better look.

There was some sort of commotion, Lionah's friends were yelling and pointing, then one of them went running back towards the castle. Squinting his eyes, Hairy could see that she was holding a rifle in her hand.

It took less than twenty minutes for the story to circulate through the entire school. The girl had found a tranquilizer gun hidden under a bush; it was almost certainly the same weapon that had been used to shoot Agros and Justin.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Catching A Thief



The school was in no mood to settle down that evening, despite the rapid approach of curfew. The relief of midterms ending, combined with the intrigue of the discovery of the rifle, kept the student body at a fever pitch of excitement. Professor McGanjagal came bustling into the Growindor common room minutes before curfew, instructing the students to get ready for bed.

"It's been a long day," she said, shooing Hairy and others out of the common room and into the dormitory, "but it's over now and it's time for lights out."

Herbonme snuck in behind McGanjagal, flashing Hairy a smile as she displayed the basket full of golden eggs nestled under her arm. Gon wasn't back yet; Hairy hoped his friend didn't miss curfew and get in trouble yet again.

Hairy slipped behind the thick curtains of his four-poster bed, looking forward to a good rest with the stress of the past week finally behind him. Thanks to Hogride providing him with the answer key for the Extractions mid-term, Hairy knew he wouldn't be kicked off of the Qannabbi team due to poor grades.

Hairy got into his pajamas and lay on his bed for a while, thinking about the events of the past few weeks. His mind was racing, and he lay there for an hour but he couldn't sleep. His thoughts turned to the Eyepalm, and he decided to give it a look. Part of him thought that maybe he should just turn it in to Duinthadope, but he was scared of getting himself or Hogride in trouble. He opened his bedside drawer, lifted out the textbooks that he used to hide the Eyepalm, and then his heart began to pound and his hands got sweaty. The Eyepalm was not there!

Hairy frantically tore through the books, dumping them onto his bed, then pulled the drawer right out of the nightstand and turned it upside down. Where was the Eyepalm? He dove onto his bed, flipping over the pillow and tearing off the bed sheets, even though he knew that the Eyepalm couldn't be there, it could only have been stolen. Why hadn't he kept the bedside dresser locked? He had assumed it would be safe since only Herbonme and Gon knew where he kept it.

Hairy dropped to his knees and lifted the mattress fringe to look along the floor, hoping that somehow he

had dropped the Eyepalm under the bed. What he saw made him gasp and jump back.

Dooby was cringing under his bed, clearly very frightened, and clutching a small box in his hands.

"What are you doing here?" hissed Hairy. "Where's my Eyepalm? Is it in that box?"

"I took nothing, most holy Hairy Pothead," squeaked Dooby. "I was seeking, but I did not find. Oh how I wish you had not come here!"

"What's in that box?" whispered Hairy angrily. "Give it to me!"

Dooby handed Hairy the small wooden box. On the front was a design of fleur-de-lis surrounded by six swords crossed into the shape of a triangle. Beneath the logo was a single word: Montecristo. He opened it feverishly, hoping to find his Eyepalm, but instead it was filled with Hogride's hand-rolled blunts.

"What's this?" demanded Hairy sternly. "Where's my Eyepalm?"

"You should not have that thing!" replied Dooby, whispering loudly. "It was given to you by an enemy."

"Hogride is not my enemy," whispered Hairy indignantly.

"Hogride did not give you the accursed Eyepalm," replied Dooby. "It was Dilirius Bake!"

"Why would he do...?" started Hairy, but then he noticed a movement out of the corner of his eye. It was Gon watching through the thin partition of his curtain. Enraged, Hairy reached through the opening, yanked Gon through the curtains and then pulled them shut.

"Are you spying on me?" hissed Hairy angrily.

"I just got back!" said Gon, pointing at Dooby. "Who's that?"

Hairy looked down, and saw that Gon was holding the Eyepalm! Hairy snatched it out of his hands.

"What are you doing with this?" whispered Hairy fiercely.

"It was amazing!" said Gon. "I found a dozen more eggs. I'm going to ace Defense!"

"Who said you could take this?" said Hairy, ignoring Gon's excitement and waving the Eyepalm in front of his face.

"Hairy, calm down!" hissed Gon. "You'll love this! I went down the secret passage to Splifpassie's private office, and he had some weird stuff in there..."

"You're a thief!" whispered Hairy angrily, momentarily forgetting Dooby in his rage.

"Hairy, he's got this crazy spiked metal belt, and it had some blood on it!" continued Gon enthusiastically. "But it's way too small for his waist. There was a knotted rope too – it looks like he uses it for whipping himself! I think he's into something very kinky!"

"I don't care what you saw!" said Hairy, shoving Gon

in the chest. "You're a thief, and you're not my friend anymore."

"Hairy, what are you..."

Gon was cut off by Dooby's sudden flurry of action. The little man grabbed the Eyepalm from Hairy's grip, slipped out between the curtains before either boy could react, ran the few steps to the nearest window, and leaped out.

Hairy and Gon followed close behind, and when Hairy looked over the ledge he saw that Dooby was rappelling down the wall from a thin line hooked to the windowsill. Within seconds, Dooby had reached the ground. With a flick, the dwarf detached the line and it snapped back to his belt. He glanced up at Hairy, then ran around the edge of the castle and disappeared.

"What's going on?" asked Olfyber, sticking his head out from behind his bed curtains. "Why are you two out of bed?"

"Hairy, Gon, are you ok?" asked Herbonme, her head also poking out between curtains.

"Yeah," said Hairy, angrily shoving Gon in the chest once more. He was in no mood to discuss any of this with anyone. "We're fine. Time for sleep."

Hairy returned sullenly to his bed, closing the curtains behind him. He was glad that the rest of his housemates were sleeping and that apparently no one had seen Dooby escape. He stuffed the cigars back into the box and threw it into his bedside drawer.



The next morning was the first day of the new term, and Growindor's first class that morning was Cannatheism. Hairy woke up late and in a foul mood. His sleep had been restless, filled with dreams of Dooby and Gon taunting him with a giant Eyepalm. Gon normally woke him up whenever he overslept, but not today. Hairy quickly pulled on his robes, cursing Gon again under his breath, and then Dooby, both for stealing his father's Eyepalm.

Hairy sprinted through the castle corridors, knowing he would be late for class. "Sorry I'm tardy, Professor," he said, coming to a skidding halt at the entrance to Cannatheism. But it wasn't Kiseru who looked up at him from behind the teacher's desk. It was Vape.

"The lesson has begun Pothead. Sit down."

"Where's Professor Kiseru?" asked Hairy without moving.

"He appears to be unavailable for class today," said Vape with a twisted smile. "I believe I told you to sit down."

"What's wrong with him?"

"A... family emergency," replied Vape, choosing his words carefully. "And if I have to ask you to sit down again, you will be in for a long detention after class."

Hairy sat, but not between Gon and Herbonme as usual. He sat next to Herbonme, on the opposite side of Gon, and did not acknowledge his presence.

"I see that Professor Kiseru had been lingering overlong on his own particular fetish with all things Japanese," continued Vape, rising from his seat and holding Kiseru's course book in his hands. "Did you cover the Scythians before Kiseru launched in on Japan? What about the Persians, did you at least do the section on Saint Haydar?"

No students spoke.

"I suppose we'll have to skip the Roman Empire... and the Merovingians," muttered Vape in annoyance, his eyes flicking to meet Hairy's for just a moment, before he went back to the Cannatheism teacher's manual. "Did Kiseru mention the gravesite of Queen Arnegunde? No? Oh, very well. We will be moving ahead, please turn to page 216. We will be studying the European Dark Ages, the Inquisition, and the Burning Times.

Herbonme raised her hand, and then began speaking before Vape had acknowledged her.

"Kiseru said we would be studying India and the Middle East next."

"Page 216!" said Vape firmly. "And don't speak unless spoken to young lady."

Vape waited a moment, glaring at the class until everyone had their books opened to the right page.

"Since the dawn of civilization, Weedsters have been both revered and persecuted around the globe," began Vape. "Our people have been viciously attacked by many government and religious institutions, but for many centuries, there was none more vicious and terrible than the Catholic Church. Many millions of our brothers and sisters have been tortured and murdered by the insatiable, hateful maw of the papist inquisitors."

This wasn't what Hairy and the other students had been expecting to hear. The class listened intently.

"These violent purges of the plant-users persisted for over 1200 years. The Roman Catholic Church hunted down the Gnostics and others who used the plant sacraments. In the 12th Century, the Pope's armies ruthlessly slaughtered our noble cousins, the mushroom-eating Manicheans. The killing continued for centuries, reaching terrible extremes during the 15th and 16th Centuries, as the Inquisitors grew in strength and power. Anyone who understood the true uses for cannabis and the other medicine plants was exterminated.

"In the 16th Century, the Catholic Inquisitors came to the New World, where they tortured and killed millions more. In Central and South America, they banned peyote, ololiuqui and other sacred plants as works of the devil, enslaving and murdering whole nations, burning any books and documents which held the secrets of botanical enlightenment.

"In modern times, the Holy See continues to colude with world governments and the United Nations to push the drug war philosophy. The Pontifical Council has repeatedly reaffirmed their hatred of marijuana, comparing legal herb with legal murder. Yet it is they who have murdered our people for generations!"

Vape went on like this for the entire class, seemingly intent on cataloging every single person who had been killed by the Catholic Church in order to suppress the knowledge and use of the magical plants.

"I sure hope Kiseru comes back soon!" whispered Hairy to Herbonme, still ignoring Gon. "This is getting depressing!"



Hairy leaped up and headed out of the classroom right as Vape dismissed the students. He didn't want to wait and face any more awkwardness with Gon. As Hairy led the charge of students out the door, he saw Duinthadope waiting in the hallway. The Master Head caught Hairy's eye and gave his head an imperceptible tilt, motioning Hairy to come with him.

They walked together in silence for a time; Hairy soon realized that they were heading towards Duinthadope's office.

Finally the Master Head broke the silence.

"Hairy, I need to ask you some questions."

"Sure," replied Hairy.

"Did you see Kiseru at all, before you encountered Agros Roach or Justin Thyme-Fertokin that night?"

"Uh, no," replied Hairy. "Why? Where is Kiseru anyways?"

Duinthadope sighed. "We had to suspend Kiseru. His fingerprints were found on the tranquilizer gun."

"What?" asked Hairy, his jaw dropping open. "How can that be?"

"Hairy, are you sure you didn't see him at all that night?"

"Yes, I am sure," replied Hairy. "I am absolutely sure. Vape was the one who appeared out of nowhere. Maybe he's the spy."

"Who said anything about a spy?" asked Duinthadope, his bushy eyebrows arched.

"Uh..." stuttered Hairy. "Actually, Hogride did. I think

it slipped out by accident."

"Hmmm..." said Duinthadope, pondering the situation carefully. "Well, I think we've caught that spy. It was late last night, we found the little fellow skulking around outside the castle. He had this most intriguing device, an electronic map of the entire Cannabis Castle. I was in my office all night, studying its use."

"Wow," said Hairy. He wasn't sure what else to say.

They had finally reached the spiral staircase that led up to Duinthadope's private office, and together they began the long climb upwards.

"Now that Hogride has returned," said Duinthadope, "I must speak with him about the importance of keeping secrets."

"Please, don't punish Hogride," pleaded Hairy. "He has been a good friend to me, and we sort of coaxed it out of him..."

"We?" asked Duinthadope, his eyebrows rising again.

"Uh..."

Duinthadope smiled. "Never mind Hairy, it doesn't matter now. The spy is being held and questioned, we are trying to find out if he was working with Bake or Kiseru."

Hairy still couldn't believe that it was Kiseru who had knocked out Agros and Justin. "Why would Kiseru want to shoot anyone?"

"We don't know," replied Duinthadope. "When Officer Pasdepot was at the height of his power, no-one could be trusted. Professors have betrayed us before. But why Kiseru, or anyone else, would attack Agros and Justin, I do not know."

They had reached the top of the stairwell. Duinthadope pushed on the great doors, splitting the giant cannabis leaf as they swung open. Together, they entered Duinthadope's huge, smoky office.

"Hairy, are you sure there is nothing you aren't telling me?" asked the Master Head, his eyes locking on Hairy's over his half-moon mirrored spectacles.

Hairy thought of all the things he was hiding from Duinthadope. How he had cheated on the Extractions exam, how he and Gon had used the Eyepalm to sneak around in the castle, even how he had lied about the house to which he actually belonged. But he couldn't tell Duinthadope any of these things, could he? He was worried that he would get Hogride in trouble, and even more worried that he would be expelled for his actions. Hairy then thought of one thing he could say that might help Duinthadope.

"That little man you caught, is his name Dooby?"

"Why, yes it is," replied Duinthadope, surprised.

"He came to my home just before Hogride did," said Hairy. "He tried to stop me from coming here. I think he

intercepted some earlier letters you may have sent me from Hempwards.”

“Fascinating,” said Duinthadope slowly, contemplating Hairy’s words. “Is that all?”

“Uh, yeah” replied Hairy. He noticed the Eyepalm resting on the corner of Duinthadope’s desk.

“Very well then, you had better run along,” said Duinthadope, sitting down behind his desk. “You don’t want to be late for Extractions! I hear that Vape’s a stickler for punctuality,” he added, his eyes twinkling.

“By the leaf and the flower!” said Hairy. “A double-dose of Vape!”

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The Mad Muggles



Hairy didn’t speak to Gon for two full weeks. He was angry with Gon for betraying his trust by stealing the Eyepalm for his own personal gain. If anyone belonged in Snytcherin, it was Gon! Hairy spoke to Herbonme, but refused to meet Gon’s eye and would not sit next to him in any classes or during meals. Herbonme didn’t seem to be around much either; she generally disappeared into the library between classes, reappearing for bed shortly before curfew with a thick stack of books.

So for two weeks Hairy ignored Gon during classes, sat by himself during meals, and generally felt angry and miserable much of the time. Yet despite his emotional state, Hairy continued to lead the Growindor Qannabbi team in an unbroken string of victories. He enjoyed playing Qannabbi, but it didn’t mean as much to him without being able to celebrate each victory with his best friend. Plus, he still missed Hogride and wondered when he would return.

The only other thing that raised his spirits was his magnificent marijuana plant. By mid-July, Headstash was about thirty feet tall, towering over the other plants and brushing up against the greenhouse roof. Headstash’s leaves were very broad and a deep, dark green, Hairy could count up to nineteen leaflet points on the leaves nearest the middle of the plant. She was just beginning to bud; Hairy could see twin floral hairs beginning to appear at every branch internode site.

Professor Sprout said that she would remove a pane of glass from the greenhouse roof so that Headstash could continue to grow unfettered.

Classes went along unabated. In Extractions, Professor Vape had warned them about the dangers of what they would be studying next. “Solvent-based extraction methods can provide some very rewarding results,” intoned Vape dramatically. “The true amber oil is a delight like no other. But these solvents can also be very dangerous. Too many good Weedsters have been hurt or even killed in the quest to extract pure cannabis resins. This is a very serious business, and we must always ensure to put safety first!” Vape fixed Hairy with an unnerving stare. “No marijuana product, regardless the potency, is worth risking your life over.”

Vape explained that solvents are very flammable, and that proper air ventilation is crucially important. The best was to work outdoors, and that was what they would be doing for many classes during the late summer.

In Hempology, they began to study the details of hemp seeds. “Although commonly called hemp seed, the proper name is actually achene,” explained LaChanvrette. “An achene is a type of simple dry fruit which contains a single seed that nearly fills the pericarp, but does not adhere to it.”

Professor LaChanvrette diagrammed the various parts of the seed, outlined the best techniques for germination, and analyzed the changes in the nutritional profile between sprouted and unsprouted seeds. “About a third of the weight of a hemp seed is oil,” she explained. “This oil is about 80% unsaturated essential fatty acids, which are not manufactured by the body and must be supplied by food. Amazingly, the proportions of linoleic acids in hemp oil are perfectly balanced to meet human requirements. Also, twenty percent of a hemp seed is protein in highly digestible forms, with a high-quality amino acid composition.”

She brought in a small hemp seed press that sat humming in the corner of the room, a large funnel full of hemp seeds feeding it from above. The machine dripped out a thin, steady stream of oil from one hole, and excreted a long narrow tube of pressed hemp protein cake from another. LaChanvrette told the class that they would be analyzing these products as well as using them for some simple food preparation exercises.

In Toker Etiquette, Professor McGanjagal began teaching them the principles of bong and pipe improvisation, how to create a usable and safe bong or pipe from a wide variety of household materials. They were also working on further principles of joint design, including how to mix hashes and resins in with the buds and still maintain an even burn and smooth toking flow.

In Defense Against the Drug Cops, Splifpassie began to teach them about the laws against marijuana, how they varied from nation to nation, and what their rights were when dealing with Square police. “In some nations, like Sweden, the law prohibits even having cannabis in your bloodstream,” explained Splifpassie, inhaling a toke of his special Rasta blend from his orange gourd.

“Police officers there can demand a blood test, and if you test positive for cannabis you are charged simply with being high.” Splifpassie leered at the class as if he wished he could extract their blood himself. “In some American states, these kinds of ‘bloodstream’ laws are also used, but so far they only apply if the police find you driving a car. In that case, having even trace amounts of cannabis in your blood means criminal charges.”

Professor Poultrice’s classes on Medicinal Studies were also moving into more advanced territory. “Now that we have completed the overview of ailments which can be treated with cannabis, I would like to explore how cannabis medicines interact with the body, through an analysis of the cannabinoid receptor system.” Poultrice explained that there are two main systems where cannabinoids lock into receptor sites, called CB1 and CB2. CB1 receptors are primarily located in the brain, but also in the lungs, liver and kidneys. CB2 receptors are mainly found in the T-cells, B-cells and blood-forming cells of the immune system.

“There are likely other cannabinoid receptor systems as well,” explained Poultrice, “but they have not yet been fully investigated.”



One warm mid-July evening, Herbonme came running into the common room just before curfew, carrying a stack of books that she slammed down onto the table where Hairy was sitting by himself, looking out the window.

“Hairy, I think you want to see this,” said Herbonme excitedly.

“Herbonme, I don’t really want to talk to you right now,” replied Hairy grumpily.

“I have the yearbooks from when your mom and dad graduated from Hempwards!” said Herbonme, grinning and ignoring Hairy’s comment.

“What?” asked Hairy, pushing up his glasses and peering at the stack of books she had dropped down. His anger had dissolved instantly. “Hempwards has yearbooks? Where did you find it?”

“I was doing research on the history of Hempwards,” said Herbonme, sliding one of the books out from the middle of the pile. “Actually I was trying to find out more

about the Captains of the Chalice stuff, but I stumbled across the section where all the old Hempwards yearbooks are kept in the library. They seem to have stopped making them about 12 years ago.”

She opened the yearbook and flipped quickly past pages of student photos, stopping on a page of collaged pictures showing kids doing fun things during the school year.

“There he is Hairy!”

She was pointing to a photo of the Growindor Qannabbi team, gleefully posing with the Hempwards Qannabbi Bowl and dressed in their golden team colors.

“That’s your dad!” said Herbonme, pointing at the Growindor Toker, holding his bong over his head with both hands. It took Hairy a moment to recognize the gangly, grinning teenager in the photo as his dad. He took a sharp breath and studied his father’s face.

“See, it says here,” said Herbonme. “Growindor’s Champion Qannabbi team: May Kinnabommer, Rolph Atties, Cherry Oyl, Jay Pothead and...” she glanced at Hairy with concern, “...Dilirijs Bake.”

Hairy inhaled again as he saw the face of the traitor who had once been his father’s best friend. Dilirijs had his arm around Jay, both of them smiling and mugging for the camera. Hairy searched their faces; murderer and victim, looking for any signs that either knew what lay ahead for them both.

“And look here,” said Herbonme, pointing at another smaller photo closer to the bottom of the page. “Here’s your dad again.”

The photo was tiny, but Hairy could clearly make out his father’s face. Again he was with Dilirijs, this time with another boy standing between them. They were standing close, Jay and Dilirijs passing joints to each other so that they formed an X over the middle boy’s chest, who had a hand behind each of them and was making V signs over both their heads.

“The caption just says ‘Mad Muggles exposed!’” said Herbonme. “So I wasn’t sure who that was with Dilirijs and your Dad. But then I went through all the student photos in the yearbook, and finally I found him. Hang on.”

She flipped back a few dozen pages and stopped at a page with student photos, profiles and write-ups. She put her finger onto the photo of a student named Ratsoff Codepipe. “That’s him.”

The photo showed a typical young black-haired Weedster, grinning for the camera with a fat joint in his mouth. It was clearly the same boy who was with Hairy’s father and Dilirijs in the other photo.

Ratsoff “The Joker” Codepipe. Voted most likely to solve the JFK assassination. Favorite strain is California

Orange. Most embarrassing moment was when he hallucinated that Duinthadope was the Devil. Best moment was running the Hempwards booth at Burning Man. Favorite phrase is "Do what thou wilt!" JP&DB catch you later!

"Here's your dad's profile," said Herbonme, flipping to another page. In his graduation photo, Hairy's dad was holding the huge Qannabbi Bowl Trophy in his lap.

Jay "Supertoker" Pothead. Voted most likely to found his own religion. Favorite strain is Blueberry. Most embarrassing moment was getting caught with MW during the camping trip. Best moment was winning both the Qannabbi Bowl and Iron Lungs Trophy. Favorite phrase is "Marijuana smoke is God's breath." RC&DB stay real! VV blows!

"And...?" asked Hairy, after he had read his father's write-up and examined the photo.

Herbonme looked at him, then silently flipped back two pages and pointed at the photo of Dilirius Bake.

In his graduation photo, Dilirius was wearing a triangular hat, decorated with a central triangle surrounded by lines radiating outwards. His fists were resting under his cheekbones, with his thumbs cocked and pointing up on either side of his face.

Dilirius "The Cook" Bake. Voted most likely to blow your mind. Favorite strain is Purple Kush. Most embarrassing moment was taking off his clothes while tripping out during the Waykenbake. Best moment was taking off his clothes while tripping out during the Qannabbi Bowl victory party. Favorite phrase is "Reality is for people who can't handle hallucinations." RC&JP keep tripping balls!

"Your mom didn't graduate the same year," said Herbonme, grabbing another book from the pile. "But I found her here in the next year's book."

Hairy's mother had flowing red hair and sparkling green eyes. She was beautiful, her smile radiated warmth and love. Hairy's heart ached when he saw the photo; he wished he could have known her.

Mary-Jane "Green Goddess" Warner. Voted most likely to be worshipped as an Earth Mother. Favorite strain is God Bud. Most embarrassing moment was being caught with JP in the hempfield. Best moment was winning the International Junior Breeder's Cup. Favorite phrase is "Plant the seeds of love." RC,DB&JP: TLF!

"Hey, look at this," said Gon. Hairy didn't realize he had come over, and he turned to see Gon holding open the first yearbook. "It looks like Vape graduated the same year as your Dad!"

Gon pointed at the photo of a young Vacuous Vape, his skin red and blotchy, his hair was as dark and greasy

as ever. He read Vape's caption out loud.

Vacuous "The Viper" Vape. Voted most likely to end up teaching at Hempwards. Favorite strain is Red Dragon Oil. Most embarrassing moment was being dosed during the graduation ceremonies. Best moment was uncovering a new method to isomerize delta-11-THC. Favorite phrase is "The Salamander is born in fire."

"I guess Vape's always been weird," said Gon, chuckling. He picked up a pen and drew a tiny mustache and horns on Vape's face before Herbonme could stop him.

"Perfect," said Hairy, grinning broadly at both his friends, all animosity forgotten.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

The Steambolt



Classes seemed less and less important during August, as the excitement among the Growindors was building to a fever pitch. Some students were worried about final exams, but mostly they were thinking and talking about Qannabbi.

The last time Growindor had enjoyed a completely undefeated season was when Jay Pothead had played Toker in his final year. Snytcherin had won the Qannabbi Cup for the last few seasons, so most students in the school were cheering for the Growindors.

Olfyber pushed the team harder than ever, with practice seeming to take up every spare moment between classes. Finally came August 25, the day for the final Qannabbi match. Growindor remained undefeated, but they still had to play a final Championship game against the second-place Snytcherins.

The final Qannabbi game of the season was traditionally played outdoors, in a small, open field. The Growindors ran onto the field, dressed in their golden uniforms, enjoying the applause and cheers from the entire school body, which had gathered in special stands set up just to watch the game. Hairy and his teammates took their places at the Table, while the Snytcherins entered the field from the other side. Hairy wasn't paying attention to them, instead scanning the crowd to see Herbonme and Gon. His spirits soared when he saw them sitting with Hogride, who must have

just returned from his trip. The huge biker gave Hairy a broad smile and an enthusiastic wave.

When Hairy returned his attention to the field, he was shocked to see the pallid face of Narco sneering at him from across the Qannabbi table.

"Hey Pothead," said Narco with a sneer. "Fancy seeing you here."

On the table before Narco was a vaporizer unlike any Hairy had ever seen. It shimmered in the sun, a sleek silver device of rare, minimalist beauty. It had the word STEAMBOLT emblazoned upon it in flowing script.

Narco pointed at a large opening in the side. "You just stick whole buds in there," he said, unable to resist taunting Hairy further. "Leaf, stalk and all. No trimming or grinding required." Narco was smirking so broadly that his cold eyes were reduced to slits. "It's going to revolutionize the sport!"

"That's cheating!" said Hairy indignantly, turning to Olfyber for support. "That's not fair!"

"So a fancy vaporizer is only allowed when it's yours?" said Narco innocently. "Is that it Pothead?"

The other Snytcherins snickered.

"No," shouted Hairy in frustration. "But with the Nimbus you still need to trim and grind the..."

"It's legal," groaned Olfyber, clenching his jaw in anger, "although it's going to get banned from competitive play when the Qannabbi Administrators meet next month. The Steambolt is a brand new vaporizer model, it's not even supposed to be on the market yet!"

"It's not," said Narco, leering malevolently. "But some of us have daddies with friends at the Steambolt Corporation."

The amplified voice of game commentator Indo Zoomer boomed across the field. "Welcome one and all to this year's Hempwards Qannabbi Championship match! Today we will see whether the Snytcherins can break through the Growindor's unbeaten streak to become school champions! Judging by their amazing performance so far this year, the Growindors should have this one in the bag, but the Snytcherins have been a serious contender, and as we've all seen already this season, anything can happen at a Qannabbi game!"

Indo announced the Growindor team, and then the Snytcherins.

"As usual, the Snytcherins are playing Chi Zeeter and the lovely Dyme Dropper as Trimmers," said Indo. "Team Captain Stu Lee is Grinder, and Fleece Singer is Rollpacker. But the sensational Snytcherin Toker Bunk O'Connor is off the field tonight, replaced for this final

game of the season by Narco Badboy." Narco raised his hands over his head and did a mocking little dance. "This is a historic match this afternoon, for the first time ever we have two first-year students facing off as Tokers in the Hempwards Qannabbi final!"

Chi was tall, lean and graceful, with smooth Asian features. Dyme was buxom and curvy, with darker skin and long, curly black hair. Stu was short and wiry, his black eyes narrowed as he surveyed the competition. Fleece was chubby with puffy blond hair, the exact opposite of Narco's slicked-back do.

"Another first today," continued Indo, "the Snytcherins are sporting a brand-new Steambolt, the newest, fastest and smoothest vaporizer on the market today. It's got a highly automated system, and from what I've heard it's just like inhaling air! This is going to give the Snytcherins a serious advantage, and should make for an interesting match."

There was applause and hoots of support from the Snytcherins watching from the stands.

"As per the standard Championship rules, each team is working their way through what will be a full two ounces of buds once it has been trimmed," announced Indo. "The strain today is Super Silver Haze, actually from last year's late-harvest specialty greenhouse crop, and it's been curing in the

Hempwards vaults for a full nine months. This is some sweet smoke ladies and gentleman; our Tokers are in for a real treat today.

"Our Reeferee is Highly Splifpassie," announced Indo, as the Professor limped out onto the field, a bong in each hand. "It looks like he's finished inspecting the bongs, I think we're almost ready to start the game! The Reeferee is responsible for the safety and integrity of all the equipment on the field, so he needs to be sure everything is in working order. All right now, the sun is shining, there's almost no wind, and it's a perfect day for Qannabbi. Let's smoke some ma-a-a-ri-juana!"

"There's the whistle! And look at those scissors go! The Weedly twins are in perfect form today, snipping and trimming with amazing skill. They've been having a fabulous season this year. Chi and Dyme are also doing some smooth work but what's this? Narco is bringing a handful of raw buds down to his end of the table. He's starting to feed them right into the Steambolt, without any trimming or grinding at all!"

"Growindor Grinder Crystal Nuggs is showing off her usual sublime wrist technique as she turns those trimmed buds into fluffy rolling material! Snytcherin falling a little behind in their grinding, but Narco is



already inhaling on the Steambolt, while Growindor is still prepping their buds. This is already turning into a very strange game here today!”

“Now Olfyber is making his signature move, packing the big bong with his left hand and the Nimbus 4200 with his right. That Nimbus sure has seen a lot of action this year, but it’s still holding out nicely. Hairy’s having a little trouble with the lighter there, he can’t seem to get it going...”

Hairy felt his fingers slipping against the lighter; he couldn’t get it to spark. Olfyber looked at him in alarm, and reached for the spare, flicking it and waving it over the bowl. But no fire came; their backup lighter was also dead.

“Dammit!” yelled Olfyber, shaking the lighter furiously and trying to spark it again and again. “How can both lighters be busted?”

Hairy saw Narco looking his way, inhaling from the Steambolt with a knowing smirk on his face. Hairy knew that Narco had somehow sabotaged their equipment. He dropped the lighter onto the table and fished into his pocket for the pack of matches. By Qannabbi rules, each team was allowed only two lighters and one pack of matches, no further supplies could be brought onto the field once the game had begun. If the matches didn’t work, the Growindors were doomed.

Hairy flipped open the cardbook book of matches, and gasped in dismay. The heads had been snipped off of every match in the pack. Hairy turned the pack to Olfyber and showed him the useless pack of cardboard strips.

“How did that happen?” shouted Olfyber, still fiddling with the lighter. “Didn’t you check them before the game?”

“No!” replied Hairy frantically, ashamed that he had failed in one of his duties as Toker. “I’ve never had to use them before. We’ve never, ever had a lighter malfunction! This is sabotage!”

Spilfpassie looked dismayed, but he didn’t call a penalty or end the game. Narco kept sucking nonchalantly on the Steambolt, then picked up a joint that Fleece had rolled for him, lit it casually and took a deep toke. Narco exhaled smoke rings, while Fleece stuck another whole unmanicured bud into the Steambolt opening. The Snytcherins weren’t even trying hard, confident in the advantage given them by their advanced vaporizer and the Growindor’s lack of flame.

Hairy took a drag off the Nimbus, emptying it in a single breath, but he knew his team was falling far behind. Without some means of lighting the joints and bong hits, Hairy would have to rely on the Nimbus only, and Growindor could not compete.

Hairy knew that he couldn’t let Narco and the

Snytcherins take this victory away from him and his teammates. He stopped thinking for a moment and closed his eyes. Time seemed to slow down. The roar of the assembled crowd faded away.

Hairy tilted back his head and inhaled the clean air into his lungs. He could feel his heart beating. He could hear the rush of blood in his ears. He could feel the warm sun on his face. His mind was clear and focused.

Suddenly, he knew what he had to do.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The Bong Hit of Fire



Hairy! Hairy, are you OK?”

Olfyber’s voice pulled Hairy back to reality. Time whipped back to its normal speed. The roar of the crowd engulfed him once again. Hairy knew how to keep his team in the game.

Hairy took off his glasses and held one lens over the fully packed bong bowl. He adjusted the angle carefully, focusing the sun’s rays into a tight point of concentrated light. Instantly, the buds began to smolder. Splifpassie took a few steps back in apparent alarm. Hairy inhaled, drawing in a thick cloud of smoke. He moved the pinprick of light over the surface of the bud, turning it all into ash as he sucked in the fumes. There was a strange flavor mixed in with the smoke; Hairy wondered if the bong water was entirely fresh.

The crowd went wild, clapping and hooting and screaming Hairy’s name.

“Roll them fat, Olf!” called out Hairy, picking up a joint from the table and lighting the tip with his improvised solar-powered igniter. He inhaled the entire joint in three long tokes, feeling the cannabinoids locking into his bloodstream, mixing with the rush of competitive adrenaline.

“Another amazing comeback from the Growindor Toker!” yelled Indo excitedly. “But will Hairy’s improvised lighter be enough to catch them up?”

Hairy emptied the Nimbus again, and then used his glasses to ignite the tip of a hugely fat joint that Olfyber had just finished spinning up. The regulation-sized paper was stretched to its limit, the thin strip of glue barely holding the joint together. Hairy inhaled as deeply as he could and the joint blazed to life, burning down half its length in a massive toke.

Hairy glanced across the table at his opponents. Without his glasses on, he had to strain his eyes to

focus, and things were still a blur. The Snytcherins were ahead, but in their overconfidence they had not pressed their advantage, and now they were scrambling to maintain their lead. Hairy watched Narco feed another big clump of stalk, stem and bud right into the Steambolt, while lazily smoking the fat joint drooping between his thin, cruel lips.

Hairy grabbed another huge, freshly rolled joint from Olfyber and ignited it with focused sunlight while puffing madly on the one between his lips. Then he gripped both joints together in one hand, inhaling on them together while watching Olfyber rolling another joint with one hand and packing the bong bowl with the other. When the bong was loaded, Olfyber refilled the Nimbus, then looked up at Hairy.

"Great work, Toker!" grinned the Growindor Captain, lost in the raw competition of the sport.

Hairy glanced down his table, squinting his eyes to see more clearly. Fried and Gaje were trimming with speed and precision. Crystal gave him a quick smile before redoubling her efforts, grinding the buds into perfect rolling material for Olfyber. Hairy appreciated their fine work, the joints and bong hits were so clean that they went down his throat like sweetly scented air. Despite the power of the Steambolt, the Growindors were still holding their own. But that wouldn't be enough to win; they needed to go faster to overtake the Snytcherin.

Hairy thought about the maneuver he had done in the first game, burning and inhaling entire unmanicured stalks of bud. But without a lighter, it wouldn't be possible to ignite the raw buds and leaves fast enough to pull off that trick again. Hairy tossed down two roaches and grabbed the bong, moving the pinprick of focused sunlight around the bud to ensure he cleared the whole bowl in a single, huge hit. He glanced at the blurred form of Splifpassie, who seemed to be keeping as much space as possible between himself and Hairy.

Hairy took another inhalation from the Nimbus 4200, but then he heard the unit give a shudder and a click, and a small puff of black smoke came out of the top.

"Holy smoke!" yelled Olfyber, tapping on the vaporizer. "What happened?"

Hairy didn't say anything, thunderstruck with shock and surprise. Olfyber glanced over at Narco, who was inhaling on the Steambolt with a look of feigned innocence, trying unsuccessfully to hide a broad smirk.

"A vaporizer malfunction!" shouted Indo in surprise. "The Growindors seem cursed today! They clearly should have been maintaining their equipment more carefully. I think this is it folks, there's no way the Growindors can win this now!"

Hairy clenched his jaw, grimacing in determination.

He would not give up. By itself, the loss of the vaporizer would not have ensured the Growindor defeat. But combined with their handicap of being forced to use the sun-powered heat source, Hairy knew his team shouldn't expect to win the championship. But Hairy decided that he wouldn't let anything stop him from trying his hardest. He knew Growindor had the better team and they deserved to win! Damn that Narco!

Hairy grabbed another two joints from Olfyber, each rolled precisely to the maximum width possible. He used his glasses to light one, used its tip to light the other, then plucked a third freshly rolled fattie from Olfyber's skilled fingers and slid it between the first two, letting their twin cherries ignite it from each side of its tip as he inhaled on all three at once.

Hairy's mind was soaring; the rush of so much premium cannabis smoke was sending him to an even higher plane than usual. His lungs felt strong and good. He would not give up.

With long, smooth tokes, Hairy inhaled on the three joints in his mouth, watching Olfyber deftly creating perfect new joints in each hand. Hairy took both freshly sealed jays from Olfyber, sticking them between his lips with one hand and focusing hot sunlight on their tips with the other. Soon Hairy was inhaling on five, then seven huge bombers at once, spitting out roaches and cramming in fresh joints at the same time. Normally, the vaporizer tokes served to give his lungs a slight break, but now Hairy was inhaling nothing but pure smoke, and he could hear a buzzing in his ears as he forced his lungs to work harder, pumping endless jointfuls of smoke through his body and bringing him closer to victory.

"This is turning into a seriously strange game here folks," announced Indo, "but Hairy Pothead is keeping Growindor in the contest. He's puffing like a chimney, eight, nine, now ten joints at once! This is a stunning performance from the young Hairy Pothead. Narco is doing fine, but, wait... what's this?"

Hairy couldn't see exactly what was happening at the Snytcherin table, but he heard something that gave him a fresh hope: Narco cleared his throat. Hairy smiled as best he could with his mouth crammed full of joints, knowing what would come next. Narco gave a slight cough, followed by another, and soon he was coughing full on, sputtering and hacking as he struggled to regain control of his lungs. Hairy continued to inhale, lighting the tip of yet another fat joint off the mass already in his mouth.

It took Narco only a few moments to regain control and get back to sucking on the Steambolt, but all the time Hairy kept on puffing, steadily reducing the Snytcherin lead.

"The Growindors are doing the unbelievable!" screamed Indo, losing his cool in the excitement of the game. "Hairy is blazing like never before! Narco's cough cost the Snytcherins precious moments, but time is running out for the Growindors! This is going to be close! Can Hairy Pothead do it?"

A cloud of dense smoke, making it even harder for him to see, surrounded Hairy's head. He spat out four roaches, and reached out blindly for another joint.

"That's it Hairy!" yelled Olfyber. "We're out of joints! Just one final bong hit!"

Hairy sucked even harder on the remaining joints, repeatedly filling and emptying his lungs with all his might. He couldn't see the Snytcherin table through the smoke and his blurred vision, but from the shouts of the crowd he knew that they were right down to the wire.

Hairy spat out the final roaches, exhaled a great cloud of smoke, and blearily reached for the bong. He slid it close, put his mouth to the hole, and took his glasses in hand. He snapped them in two, twisting both lenses so they each captured the Sun, and focusing them both on the over laden bowl. The buds began to smolder and Hairy inhaled harder than he had ever done in his life.

Time slowed down again. The smoke cleared and for a single moment Hairy saw everything with perfect clarity. Narco across from him, his eyes red and lidded, stub of a joint in one hand, the tube from the Steambolt in the other, moments away from finishing the Snytcherin stash. Twin translucent triangles of yellow sunlight coming down from Hairy's broken glasses to the buds in the bong bowl. The buds themselves, turning brown as they were heated by the focused light. The strange taste in Hairy's throat again as he began to inhale on the bong. The smoke and heat being drawn into the water, forming bubbles as it was cleansed and cooled before bursting to the surface. Smoke filling the chamber, rising to Hairy's mouth, flowing down his lungs, bringing him closer to victory.

The bong hit was almost complete, small pieces of burning ember were slipping down the hole. Hairy gripped the bong with both hands and sucked hard, taking a massive haul and drawing the final bits of red-hot ash down into the chamber. Then suddenly something ignited inside the bong. Lines of fire shot up the inside of the tube, painfully scorching Hairy's mouth and burning his lungs, while the booby-trapped bong itself exploded in a burst of flame.

For an instant Hairy heard Indo Zoomer screaming "Growindor wins! Growindor wins!"

Then Hairy collapsed to the ground, smiling through burned lips, and everything went black.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

The Midnight Run



Hairy wavered in and out of consciousness, leaving him only with brief snatches of sensation, blurred and scattered memories. The faces of his teammates looming above him. Aburning pain in his chest. Olfyber Hurd shaking him, calling his name. The voices of Splifpassie, Duinthadope, and then Nurse Poppy. Each breath was agony. Then he was floating, moving through the castle.

When Hairy came back to consciousness, he was lying on his back on a bed in the Infirmary. His eyes were crusted and difficult to open. His body was numb and at first he couldn't move at all. He felt hands on his arms and legs, rubbing warm oil into his limbs. Then the warmth of oil on his face, applied with a soothing touch, dissolving the grit in his eyes.

Slowly, Hairy opened his eyes. Nurse Poppy's face loomed over him, her reassuring smile made him feel confident in her care.

"Rest now," she said. "We'll feed you soon."

Hairy tried to swallow, but there was something wet and heavy in his mouth. Nurse Poppy reached down and gently pulled out a moist cloth. Hairy's mouth felt tender and swollen, but he could breathe and swallow.

"Your mouth and lungs were burned," said Nurse Poppy, stroking his face. "You've been out for three days. We used massive cannabinoid infusions to put you into a therapeutic comatose state. Your body has been through a lot. For a while we thought you might not make it, but the thick layer of cannabinoids in your lungs seems to have protected them from the worst of the damage. You need more rest, but you'll be fine. Don't worry, Duinthadope will find out who booby-trapped your bong."

Hairy knew who sabotaged his bong, Narco! He also knew that he had no evidence, but he hoped that Duinthadope would be able to prove it somehow. Then for sure Narco would be expelled!

Hairy lay drowsily for a while, then Nurse Poppy brought him some warm hemp seed gruel and a hemp milkshake.

"Eat this," she said, setting up a tray on Hairy's bed. "It has everything your body needs."



She gestured towards a pile of books, cards and flowers on his bedside table. "Your two friends were here for quite a long time, but you were unconscious. They left these for you. You can look at them when you have the strength."

After a slow, small meal, Hairy picked up his glasses and saw that they had been taped back together in the centre where he had snapped them apart. He put them on and looked at the Get Well Soon cards in silence. There was one each from Gon and Herbonme, and another card signed by everyone on his Qannabbi team. One big card seemed to have been signed by every single student in Growindor House, including McGanjagal's name at the end in her tight, tidy script.

Hairy looked at the stack of books, and smiled to himself. He knew that Herbonme had made sure he had all the textbooks he needed to study for finals, but Hairy didn't feel like studying right now.

Herbonme had also left him the two Hempwards Yearbooks that showed his mom and dad. Hairy flipped one open, looking at the photos of his father and re-reading his write-up. He smiled again when he saw the photo of Vacuous Vape, still adorned with Gon's horns and mustache.

Hairy had a niggling feeling that he was missing something important. He flipped to Ratsoff Codepipe, and then Dilirius Bake, going over the tale again in his mind. Ratsoff was Pasdepot's first victim, killed just after he and Hairy's father had graduated from Hempwards. Later, Dilirius joined Pasdepot, eventually helping him to find Hairy's parents, and setting off the grow room fire which burned down their home. But Dooby said that Dilirius had been the one who had left Hairy the Eyepalm. How could that be?

Hairy's head began to throb. While at Hempwards, Ratsoff, Dilirius and Jay had all been best friends. "Mad Muggles" is what the yearbook had called them. Duinthadope had said that Dilirius Bake knew the school's secret passages better than anyone. So Dilirius probably had his own Eyepalm. That only made sense. Maybe all three of them did.

Suddenly Hairy's mind clicked. His father's favorite strain was Blueberry. A blue dot had indicated the position of his Eyepalm on the map. Dilirius' favorite was California Orange, while Ratsoff liked Purple Kush. The other two dots he had seen were orange and purple!

Hairy's heart began to pound. If he was right, did that mean that Ratsoff and Dilirius were both in the school? No, it only meant that their Eyepalms were both there. But if Pasdepot had killed Ratsoff, maybe Pasdepot had his Eyepalm! Could Pasdepot and Dilirius both be in the school?

Hairy knew he needed to speak with Duinthadope.

He tried to rise from the bed, but his arms were weak and he couldn't lift himself out. Hairy called out faintly, drawing the attention of Nurse Poppy.

"Hairy Pothead, you need to rest," she said, coming over to him. "Your body is still recovering from quite an ordeal! What are you trying to do?"

"Du... Duinthadope..." said Hairy, his voice hoarse and raspy.

"The Master Head is away," replied Poppy, putting Hairy back into position on the bed. "He's gone to the Council on important business. But he gets back very soon."

"Pa..." muttered Hairy, trying to tell Nurse Poppy what he knew.

"Shush now," she replied, pulling open Hairy's pajama shirt and rubbing a strong-scented oil into his chest. "This will calm you and help your lungs to heal."

Hairy fought to stay awake, but the power of Nurse Poppy's lotion was too much for his weakened state. He slipped back into unconsciousness.



Hairy awoke with a start. He didn't know how long he had been sleeping, but the infirmary was dark, so he assumed it was night. He sat up in bed slowly, his muscles aching, but able to sustain his own weight. He felt stronger now. His mind was still clouded with sleep, but he knew that he needed to speak to Duinthadope, and that he needed to see the Eyepalm again.

Hairy stood next to the bed, feeling his body tingling as the blood began to flow back into his limbs. He took a deep breath; his lungs ached as they expanded. He didn't feel great, but he was strong enough to do what needed to be done. He impulsively took his Double-Bubbler from the drawer and put it in his pocket.

Walking on shaky legs, Hairy crept out of the room unnoticed, and headed down the corridors towards Duinthadope's office. It wasn't far from the infirmary, and soon he reached the spiral staircase which lead where he needed to go. Walking slowly, and taking frequent breaks, Hairy ascended the stairwell.

Finally, he reached the massive doors that marked the entrance to the Master Head's private office. Hairy pulled them open and stepped into the gloom. The glow from the lava lamps illuminated the Eyepalm still sitting amidst the clutter on Duinthadope's desk. Hairy grabbed it, turned it on, and sat down in Duinthadope's plush chair.

Hairy flicked through the various maps and camera angles. He wasn't really sure what he was looking for.

Suddenly, a loud voice interrupted his research.

"Pass the joint, pass the joint! Craawww!"

Hairy leaped out of the chair, his heart pounding, ready to fight the intruder. Then he realized that it was only Duinthadope's parrot that had startled him so. The huge, bright green bird bobbed its head up and down a few times, eyeing Hairy warily. Then it tucked its head back under its wing and returned to its rest.

Hairy picked up the Eyepalm, his hands shaking. Then he saw the purple dot blink on, moving down a corridor deep in the bowels of the Castle. He switched to the camera mode, trying to find a view of who it could be. He was frustrated at first, and then suddenly a figure loomed into view. It was Professor Splifpassie! Hairy saw him moving quickly, looking at something in his hand. The purple dot winked out just as Splifpassie put the object back into his pocket.

Hairy switched back to the map view, trying to figure out where Splifpassie was going. He was near the experimental grow rooms, but then Hairy saw the orange dot blink on. It was moving down another corridor, seemingly heading in the direction from where Splifpassie had just come.

Hairy switched back to camera mode, trying desperately to catch an image of what he knew must be Dilirius Bake. But whoever it was, they knew the camera placement well. Hairy couldn't get more than an occasional glimpse of an arm or a leg as the figure passed by various cameras. Then the orange dot blinked off and Hairy lost track of the figure.

For a moment, Hairy was frozen with uncertainty. Should he run to find McGanjagal, wake up the school, tell everyone what he knew? He wished he could speak with Hogride, but knew that he would not be able to make the long walk across the grounds to his cabin.

Hairy hated Dilirius, the man who had betrayed and murdered his parents. He imagined himself in a final confrontation against Dilirius, personally revenging the wrongs that this evil man had perpetrated against him, his family, and so many others. Hairy rose from Duinthadope's desk, his mind filled with rage. He would do this alone. He left the Master Head's office, pushed the great doors closed, and headed down the stairs.

Hairy moved quietly through the school, passing down corridors and stairwells undetected. He ignored the weakness of his limbs, the pounding in his head. He had only one thought on his mind, to find Dilirius and seek revenge.

Hairy consulted the Eyepalm occasionally, but saw no further sign of either colored dot. He was close now, near the point where he had seen the orange dot moving along. Hairy decided to take a shortcut, and stopped upon reaching the Gallery of Goddesses, a

series of statues representing cannabis-related deities from around the world. He went past a vicious-looking Kali with her necklace of human heads, and moved in behind the sexy cat-faced Egyptian ganja goddess, Bast. He tugged on her left ear, and then slipped through the panel that slid open on the wall behind her.

Hairy crept down the secret corridor, not sure exactly where he was going, moving on instinct. He turned on the Eyepalm again, glancing down as he turned a corner, and saw that the orange dot was back on, and almost touching his blue dot! Hairy looked up into the horrified face of a man with an Eyepalm also in his hands.

The man was a frightful apparition. He had a mass of filthy, matted hair that hung down to his elbows. If eyes hadn't been shining out of the deep, dark sockets, he might have been a corpse. The pale, waxy skin was stretched tightly over the bones of his face. Although the man before him bore faint resemblance to the handsome young student Hairy had seen in the Hempwards yearbook, he knew instantly that this was Dilirius Bake.

Dilirius bared his yellow teeth into a grin.

"Hairy!" said Dilirius. His voice was thick and raspy, as if he had not used it in a long time. "I'm glad you found me..."

"Shut up," said Hairy firmly. "Shut your filthy mouth."

There was a moment's pause, as neither of them spoke or moved. Then Hairy summoned his strength, threw his Eyepalm at Dilirius' face, and charged him with all his force. Distracted by the missile, Dilirius didn't dodge as Hairy struck him full force in the chest, knocking him to the ground and sending both Eyepalms skidding further down the hall.

"Murderer!" yelled Hairy, trying to punch Dilirius in the face. But Dilirius grabbed Hairy's fist, twisted his arm, shifted their weight and rolled over so that he was on top of the furious boy. Dilirius then leaned forward, holding down Hairy's right arm with his hand and pinning Hairy's left arm under his knee. His matted hair hung down into Hairy's face.

"You killed my parents!" yelled Hairy, struggling futilely to break free.

"Yes..." replied Dilirius. "I have always regretted that."

Hairy spat at Dilirius, hitting him in the face. "I'll kill you!" he yelled, still struggling.

"Stop it boy!" said Dilirius sharply. "You must listen to me. I came here for you."

"You shot Justin and Agros!" yelled Hairy.

"No, I only shot Agros," said Dilirius.

"You came here to kill me, like you killed my mother, and my father!"

"No. I am sworn to protect you, boy," said Dilirius, his voice growing hoarse. "You are more special than you..."

"Liar!" yelled Hairy.

"No..." said Dilirius quietly, his voice cracking. "I will never lie to you."

"Let me go!" said Hairy.

"Yes, Dilirius let the boy go." It was Splifpassie, standing in the secret passage, holding a long knife in his hands.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

The Order of The Chalice

plifpassie stood menacingly at the end of the corridor, still wearing his wrap-around sunglasses despite the poorly lit surroundings. The knife blade in his hand reflected the light from the screens of the twin Eyepalms lying on the floor. He grimaced as he took a small step forward.

Dilirius looked up at Splifpassie and slowly released his grip on Hairy. He shifted himself off of the young Weedster's body and slid backwards to lean against the wall, still sitting on the floor.

Hairy sat up, feeling dizzy and weak as the full force of the night's adventures hit him at once. He felt nauseous, the hallway began to spin and he thought that he might throw up at any moment. He leaned his weight against the wall opposite from Dilirius, and took deep, slow breaths to steady himself.

"Does someone need to die here and now, Dilirius?" asked Splifpassie, glancing at Hairy as he advanced another small step closer. "Or will you be a good fellow and behave?"

"Silas!" said Dilirius. "Don't trust him Hairy, he..."

"Shut your mouth Bake," said Splifpassie, glancing at Hairy again. "I can slit necks from ear to ear, without making a sound."

Dilirius said nothing. He planted his feet on the floor and rose shakily to a standing position.

"I will succeed where the Vatican failed," continued Splifpassie, coming another step closer. "They should have killed you when they had the chance."

Dilirius still didn't speak. Hairy looked from one man

to the other, trembling from nausea and fatigue.

"Can you call for help?" Hairy asked Splifpassie, still feeling very weak.

Splifpassie took another step, ignoring Hairy, his eyes locked on Dilirius.

"Silas, this isn't right," said Dilirius quietly. "There's still time for you to..."

Splifpassie suddenly leaped through the air, bringing his long blade out in a wide, slashing arc. Dilirius moved with quick, catlike grace, ducking under the outstretched blade and jabbing Splifpassie in the left thigh.

Splifpassie gasped at the jab, but it didn't slow him down. He brought the blade back against Dilirius, but Dilirius staggered back, narrowly avoiding the second strike. He kicked at Splifpassie's left thigh, making him gasp again.

"Still wearing the *cilice*, hey Silas?" asked Dilirius mockingly.

"*Castigo corpus meum*," said Splifpassie, moving forward and jabbing at Dilirius, striking shallow cuts on both of his forearms.

Splifpassie pressed his advantage, coming in close and making a quick upward slash, cutting a red line up Dilirius' belly and chest. Dilirius gasped and staggered backwards, putting his hands onto the wound and looking down at the blood seeping from the long slash.

"Pain is good," said Splifpassie, raising his knife for a killing blow. But Dilirius suddenly reached out a bloody hand and grabbed at Splifpassie's face, pulling off his sunglasses.

Hairy gasped as he saw Splifpassie's eyes. His pupils were dark red, as if filled with blood.

"*Quia vidi Dominum*," said Splifpassie, bringing his dagger down towards his enemy's chest.

Then Hairy heard a pop, and the Professor gasped, staggered forward, and fell against Dilirius, who caught him and lowered him gently to the ground. There was a feathered dart protruding from Splifpassie's back. Hairy turned, and saw Dooby approaching from the other end of the passage, holding a tranquilizer gun in his small hands.

"Dilirius," said the little man, coming closer, "are you alright?"

"Yes," said Dilirius, giving a cough and looking at the long wound stretching down his front. "It stings but it's not deep." He leaned his arm against Dooby and lowered himself back to the floor, sitting next to the unconscious body of Splifpassie.

"What's going on?" asked Hairy in alarm. "You two are friends?"

"No," said Dooby. "Not for fifteen years. Once we were brothers in the Order of the Chalice Then, like

everyone else, I thought he had betrayed us all. Now, I am not so sure.”

“HE KILLED MY PARENTS!” yelled Hairy, struggling to stand again.

“It was an accident...” said Dilirius quietly. “I thought I could disarm it.”

“You’re lying,” said Hairy, feeling too weak to do more.

“Hairy, I have been sworn to protect you,” said Dilirius. “I was sworn to protect your father, but I failed him.”

“You lie,” said Hairy softly.

“Dilirius was a double-agent Hairy,” said Dooby. “The Captain of the Chalice assigned him to infiltrate the Vatican, to find out more about Officer Whats-his-name by pretending to betray all of us. It was a difficult task, and not many knew the true nature of his position. For the trick to work, only a very few could know the truth. It was a very confusing time.”

“What are you talking about?” asked Hairy, angrily.

Dooby turned to Dilirius.

“How did you escape the Vatican prison, Brother Bongadier?” he asked.

Dilirius reached into an inside pocket and pulled out a thin silver case. He opened it and removed a half-smoked joint. Dooby took a small box from his pocket, produced a match and sparked it into flame.

“*Bhava na sana hridayam*,” said Dilirius softly before taking a puff. The smoke smelled a bit raunchy, not fresh. Dilirius took a second, deeper inhalation before speaking.

“Sometimes they tortured and questioned me every day for weeks, then other times they would leave me alone for months, to rot in despair, wondering if I had been forgotten, if I would ever see sunlight again. I was there for fifteen long years, but I told them nothing useful.”

Dilirius took another toke and then passed the joint to Dooby.

“I used the teachings of Sri Brahmarishi Narad and Bhagavan Das, focusing my mind, remembering the eternal. One day, I noticed a small mushroom growing in my cell chamber. I thought nothing of it at first, but as it grew I eventually recognized it as *Psilocybe Weillii*, a potent species of psychedelic, named after famed Weedster and naturopath Andrew Weil. How it got there I do not know. Perhaps I had a stray spore on my clothes and it found favor in my cell. Perhaps the Goddess Kalisent it there. I don’t know.”

Dooby offered the joint to Hairy, but he put up his hand to refuse it. He would not smoke anything from Dilirius Bake until he knew better what was going on.

“I tended the mushroom,” continued Dilirius, taking

the joint back from Dooby. “I let it grow bigger, and when it was mature I carefully collected its spores. I planted them all around my cell. The Vatican’s Swiss guards took no notice. The cells were filthy to begin with, and small batches of mushrooms growing in a corner attracted no attention.”

“For three years I collected the mushrooms,” said Dilirius. “I carefully dried them, then ground them with my teeth, careful to swallow nothing, and spat my potent saliva into my food bowl. I let it dry, and pressed the remaining concentrated extract into tiny, powerful pellets.”

Dilirius sighed and passed the joint back to Dooby, who inhaled slowly, still listening to the strange tale.

“On some days, the guards would eat their meals outside my cell, and I waited with great patience until the perfect opportunity arose. With all of my skill and little bit of luck, I managed to lob a number of these psilocybin-infused pellets into each of their meals without them noticing. Both of my guards unknowingly ate the psychedelic surprise, and with a short time they were starting to giggle and sweat.

“When the mushrooms had forcibly shifted their minds into sixth-circuit consciousness, I used standard neuro-linguistic programming to induce a highly suggestible and empathic state. I told them about karma and the importance of experiencing both sides of every situation, and soon they were both naked and locked inside my cell, while I had dressed myself in one of their uniforms and made good my escape.”

Dilirius chuckled, then coughed again.

“I wish I could have spent more time reprogramming those two fellows, but I had to make haste. However, I did pass by the Vatican kitchens on my way out, and took great pleasure in dosing the stew that the Vatican chefs were preparing for the Pope and senior bishops. I wish I could have stayed to see how that went! I retrieved the two Eyepalms from where I had buried them, and then made my way to the Pot Block and stowed away on the Magic Bus, clinging to the undercarriage for the entire journey.

“I have been hiding in the school dungeons, eating the student’s leftovers and smoking their roaches,” said Dilirius, holding up the half-smoked joint. “It was I who left you that Eyepalm, Hairy. I wanted to speak to you but I was afraid that you would attack me on sight, or report me to a professor. I knew I needed to be here, to help protect you.”

“Did you give me the answers for the Extractions exam?” asked Hairy.

“No,” said Dilirius. “What are you talking about?”

“We’ve got to get him out of here,” said Dooby.

“Agreed,” replied Dilirius. “But where to?”

They were interrupted by a rasping, hacking cough from behind them. All three turned and gasped in unison as they saw the fearsome apparition.

It was a man who had suffered from terrible burns. His skin had melted long ago, and left his face a horrifying, misshaped mass of melted flesh. He wore the blue uniform of a policeman, the short sleeves revealing the burned, scarred flesh of his arms. Scraggly clumps of hair stuck out from beneath his eight-pointed policeman's cap. He held a pistol in the few remaining fingers of his twisted right hand.

"Officer Pasdepot!" said Dooby.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Secrets Revealed



Dooby took a tentative step towards his discarded tranquilizer gun. Pasdepot kept the pistol pointed directly at Hairy, but flicked his eyes at Dooby and gave him a meaningful look. The two locked eyes for a moment, then Pasdepot pointed at the tranquilizer gun with his twisted fingers, and then at Dilirius. Dooby knelt slowly and picked up the rifle, looking at Pasdepot, and then aiming it at Dilirius.

"No!" said Dilirius, putting one hand out to block Dooby's shot, while jamming the other hand frantically into his inner pocket. But then he gasped and slumped forward as Dooby shot him in the leg with a dart.

Pasdepot waved his free hand, motioning for Dooby to bring the two unconscious men down the corridor. Dooby put the rifle on Splifpassie's inert body, grabbed one of each man's wrists, and began dragging them towards Pasdepot.

Hairy stood, immobile, his heart pounding, blood rushing in his ears. He didn't like having Officer Pasdepot's pistol aimed straight at him. It made him very aware of his mortality, of how easily a bullet could go right through his entire body.

"Come with me," hissed Dooby, straining as he dragged the bodies down the hall. "He could have killed you already. Our only chance is to play along."

Hairy's legs felt like jelly and his feet felt like lead. But somehow he managed to stumble forward, following Dooby down the passage.

Pasdepot silently led them out of the secret pas-

sage and down the hall, and soon they reached the door marked XGC, where Hairy had been frightened by Fluffy the Doberman. Pasdepot opened the door with his mangled hand, his other hand still keeping the gun trained on Hairy's chest.

Fluffy was there, but she whined and took a submissive posture as soon as she saw Pasdepot. The burned policeman chuckled and pulled a Scooby Snack from his breast pocket, giving it to the dog and patting her on the head. Fluffy's ears went flat and she wagged her tail.

Dooby dragged the two bodies inside, followed by a still disbelieving Hairy. Pasdepot closed the door behind them, and then led them through the door marked Experimental Grow Chamber #23.

Inside Hairy saw not a grow room, but a comfortable living space. There was a small bed, a stove with a kettle and teapot, a cupboard and shelf with canned and dried foods, a table and chairs, a small bookshelf, and other simple amenities.

Pasdepot closed the door and turned to survey his captives for a moment. Then he took a swift step forward, picked up the tranquilizer gun from off of Splifpassie's body, and shot Dooby straight in the chest. The dwarf gasped and fell unconscious immediately, his body landing sideways, next to Dilirius.

Pasdepot opened the tranquilizer rifle and looked in the chamber, then turned it so Hairy could see that it was out of darts. Pasdepot dropped the rifle, holstered his pistol, and turned to Hairy. A twisted smile formed on his burned and scarred face.

"Would you like a cup of tea?" asked Pasdepot. His voice was warm and gentle.

Hairy didn't reply. He didn't know what to say.

Pasdepot went to the stove and turned a switch, bringing flame to the base of the kettle. He took out two teacups, and dropped a teabag into the pot. The kettle whistled, and Pasdepot poured the hot water into the teapot, bringing it to the table along with the cups.

Pasdepot sat down at the table, casually crossed his legs, then took a jar from out of his pocket and unscrewed the lid. He scooped out a glob of white cream and began applying it to the burned skin on his hands and arms. He seemed to be in a good mood.

"Hairy," said Pasdepot, smiling broadly in a way that gave his face an even more horrifying look. "I am so pleased to meet you at last."

Hairy remained standing in the far corner of the room, near the closed door.

"You killed my parents," said Hairy firmly. "You can go to Hell!"

"Oh, I've already been to Hell," replied Pasdepot

matter-of-factly, gesturing at his scarred visage. "Can't you tell? But kill your dear parents? That is stuff of non-sense boy. I did no such thing. That was your friend here, Dilirius Bake." Pasdepot pointed at Dilirius' unconscious form with a finger covered in cream, which he then began applying to his face.

"I came to your parents' house in peace," Pasdepot continued, "to make your father the same offer I am going to make you now. Jay was going to agree, we were really just meeting to finalize the details. Bake and the Vatican were scared, because they knew that your father could easily sweep away centuries of corruption and decay. He could replace the false Pope who now holds the throne."

"My dad could replace the Pope?" said Hairy disbelievingly. "This is insane. You're raving mad."

"The Pope sent Dilirius to kill your father. When the fire started, I tried to rescue him, and your mother too. But I could not, because the fire was too strong. I was caught in the blaze, and suffered these terrible burns. Why do you think that Dilirius escaped unharmed, while I am so horribly disfigured?"

It disturbed Hairy that what Pasdepot said made some sort of sense. "If you're so innocent," he replied, "then why did you kill Ratsoff Codepipe, and so many others?"

"My boy, my dear, dear boy," replied Pasdepot, shaking his head slowly. "I am Ratsoff Codepipe."

"What?"

"I am Ratsoff Codepipe. I never betrayed your father."

"You're Ratsoff?" asked Hairy, despite himself. "So then how did you become Officer Pasdepot?"

Pasdepot lifted the teapot and poured out two cups as he spoke.

"An excellent question. First, you must understand that Dilirius, your father and I were all good friends. It was I who created the Eyepalms," Pasdepot gestured to his hip, where Hairy saw a leather case the size of his Eyepalm attached to the policeman's black belt. "I built one for each of us by hacking into the school security system. I have always had a talent with... getting information. We used the Eyepalms as mischievous students, to play endless pranks on the Professors and other students here. Your father enjoyed playing a number of unnecessarily cruel practical jokes on Vacuous especially."

Pasdepot lifted his cup to his cracked lips and took a sip.

"Aaah. Do have some Hairy. It's a deliciously soothing ganja gunpowder tea, and you are looking dehydrated."

"I don't want anything from you," said Hairy

fiercely.

"Your concern is understandable, and your loyalty to your parents is commendable," said Pasdepot kindly, taking another sip of tea. "Perhaps your feelings for me will change as you learn the truth. Anyway, I'll continue my tale. My transformation took place shortly after we graduated from Hempwards. The three of us were hanging out together at Dilirius' house, tripping on another of his trademark homemade psychedelic concoctions. Jay had been away for a few days, he had been off with Duinthadope and other professors for some sort of special retreat, and when he returned he was acting like he was bursting to tell some big secret. As it turned out, it was quite a secret indeed."

Pasdepot put down his teacup and leaned forward, looking at Hairy. His black eyes were sharp and bright, half-hidden behind folds of melted skin. "I remember it well," he said quietly. "I was sitting on the couch, watching the walls breathe, seeing intricate mandalas

and shifting symbols of profound meaning everywhere I looked. Dilirius was lying on his back on the floor, smoking a joint and giggling to himself every few minutes. Your father was in the rocking chair, rocking back and forth nervously. When

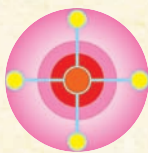
I looked his way, I could literally see the waves of suppressed energy radiating from off of him."

Pasdepot reached under the table, picking up a small silver suitcase and placing it before him. He began to carefully open the latches as he went on with his story.

"Finally, your father began to speak. He talked about being taken to a secret ritual; he said it was too weird to explain. He seemed almost embarrassed. He asked us not to tell anyone, but the words kept flowing out of him before we could reply."

Officer Pasdepot opened the case and removed a glittering Double-Bubbler, about eight inches long, with color changing dichroic glass and an easy grip. Hairy recognized it as an exact duplicate of his own water pipe, the one he still had in his pocket. Pasdepot then leaned his chair back and reached out to take a small plastic water bottle from off of the counter behind him. He carefully poured some water into his Double-Bubbler, then took a plastic baggie out of the case, slowly unrolled it, and removed a piece of green bud from it with his burned fingers. He placed the bud into the pipe, then took a small grey pouch out of the silver case, opened it, and tilted it against the pipe's bowl, shaking something over the bud.

Pasdepot took the Double-Bubbler in his hand, took a lighter from the breast pocket of his blue policeman's shirt, and sparked it into flame. Even though his limbs felt weak and he was terrified for his life, Hairy thought



wildly that maybe he should use this chance to leap at Pasdepot, to grab the gun and shoot him dead. He judged the distance between them, and then began moving slowly forward.

Officer Pasdepot puffed on his pipe, drawing thick smoke through the water in both chambers and down into his lungs. He inhaled deeply, then tilted back his head and blew a long stream of smoke into the air. He gave a hacking cough, then cleared his throat and set down the pipe. Pasdepot looked Hairy in the eye and, as if he sensed the young Weedster's thoughts, unholstered his pistol and casually placed it upon the table, gently resting his hand upon it.

"On that fateful night," continued Pasdepot lazily, "your father told me and Dilirius that he, Jay Pothead, was the ninety-ninth direct descendant of Jesus the Christ and Mary the Magdalene. He said that there was a secret society of Weedsters which had existed for many centuries, set up to secretly protect his sacred family, and to safeguard the documents which proved his lineage."

Hairy laughed scornfully. "I was right. You are raving mad."

"This group is called The Order of the Chalice. Have you never overheard anyone mentioning this group? Perhaps the term Pottery of Sion means something?"

Hairy did not reply.

"Well, regardless," said Pasdepot casually, "it turns out that Jesus used cannabis extracts and ointments to heal the sick and anoint his disciples. Indeed, marijuana is the sacred Tree of Life and the basis for Jesus' entire ministry. Plus, Jesus and Mary had a child, and the Pothead family is the direct descendants of Jesus. You, young Weedster, are the hundredth in an unbroken chain that leads directly back to our lord and savior, and further still into prehistory."

Pasdepot took another long hit from his Double-Bubbler, then set it down as he gave a series of coughs that wracked his entire body. It took a few moments for him to catch his breath and recover.

"Now, when your father started going on about this," continued Pasdepot finally, "I had a vision. I suppose it could have been the pentazocine, but I like to think it was a message from Jehovah. Regardless, everything around me began to melt away. Jay's excited voice quietened into a gentle buzz, and then the room faded into blackness. I was floating in space, existing only in the mind of God. I received a complex series of revelations about the true nature of human beings, which took me many months of further study to fully comprehend."

Pasdepot stood up and looked off in the distance, clearly reliving the moment in his mind.

"Then I saw my name lit up in the void. RATSOFF

CODEPIPE. The letters of my name swirled around and rearranged themselves, forming into a new name, my true name, a name which would bring fear to my enemies: OFFICER PASDEPOT.

Pasdepot chuckled and coughed again. "Well, it was either that, or Fearfist Dopecop. I think I made the right choice."

"And that's when you decided to kill my father?" asked Hairy. "Because you were tripping out and he thought he was Jesus?"

"No, no. How many times must I say it? I never wanted your father to die. I wanted to work together with him, and he agreed with me."

Pasdepot sat down again, reholstered his pistol, then reached down under the table and picked up another silver case, this once smaller than the first. He opened the clasps and lifted the lid, taking out a shining silver syringe with a long, thick needle. He stabbed the needle's tip into something hidden inside the case, and then pulled up the plunger to fill the chamber.

The scarred policeman stood, holding the syringe in his hand. Hairy could see a drop of milky-white liquid quivering at the needle's tip.

"Well, let's get this over with," said Officer Pasdepot.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

The Half-baked Cop



Hairy's heart thumped out of control as he watched Pasdepot rise and walk towards him, the silver needle glittering in his hand. How could he hope to fight off Pasdepot from giving him an injection?

But Pasdepot stopped before he reached Hairy, crouching down next to the prone bodies of Dilirius, Dooby and Splifpassie. He jabbed the syringe through Splifpassie's robes and into his arm, then pushed down the plunger.

"Come on now Silas," said Pasdepot quietly. "That's a good boy."

"Why do you call him Silas?" asked Hairy. "What are you doing to him?"

"Nothing bad my boy, just waking him up," said Pasdepot, standing again, and walking to the table to replace the empty syringe into its silver case. "This

man, whom you know as Professor Highly Splifpassie, is in truth a monk named Silas. Strangely, he's an albino as well. He's on loan to me from Opus Dei, the most delightfully fanatical and murderous wing of the Catholic Church. Silas is a man of many useful talents, and a master of disguise despite his lack of pigment."

Silas groaned and rolled his head.

"However, he is prone to certain... excesses," said Pasdepot, returning to Silas, pulling open his robes and exposing his left leg. Hairy could see a metal belt strapped around his thigh, which Pasdepot unbuckled and removed, exposing a bloody scar. "This thing is ridiculous," said Pasdepot, holding the belt up in the air, showing it to be covered with short spikes and caked with blood. "Silas calls this a *cilice*, but I just call it unhygienic."

Silas opened his pink eyes and sat up, groaning. His tam fell from his head, and the fake dreads, which had been poking out from under it, were still attached, revealing Silas' true hair, so blond that it was almost white. Hairy could also see smudged patches of white beneath the dark make-up that coated all his exposed skin.

"*Dei gratia*," said Silas, rubbing his face with his hands as if coming out of a trance. "Praise be to God."

"Praise be to a syringe full of speed and Vitamin B," said Pasdepot, tossing the metal belt into a corner.

Silas said nothing, instead reaching out shakily to pick up his tam and fake dreads, and then replacing them onto his head and covering up his shock of white hair.

"Come on," said Pasdepot, reaching a scarred hand down to grip Silas' wrist and helping his ally to his feet. "You have work to do. Don't fail me now."

Silas stood on shaky legs, looking around as if his eyes were still regaining their focus. When he spotted Hairy in the corner, Silas started and cursed under his breath.

"*Anguis in herba!*" said Silas, turning to Pasdepot. "Why is he still alive?"

"Now Silas," said Pasdepot, speaking slowly, with menace in his voice. "Don't get carried away like last time, remember how that whole DaVinci thing turned out. Young Pothead and I are going to have a little talk. *Argumentum ad crumenam*."

"*Argumentum baculinum*," replied Silas, leering at Hairy and putting his finger across his throat.

"Whatever," said Pasdepot, shrugging. He put his hand on Silas' shoulder, turning him away from Hairy and walking with him towards the door. "You have things to do my friend. Go finish setting up the fire-

works, and leave us two to talk alone."

"*Inflammo cunctus*," said Silas, letting himself be led to the exit. "But you must not tarry! Strike the root and sever the line."

"I am the one with the Papal letters, Silas," replied Pasdepot, lowering his voice to a deadly hiss. "Must we go over this again?"

Silas and Pasdepot walked to the door, still debating quietly and quickly, now entirely in Latin.

Taking advantage of being ignored, Hairy went to where Dilirius and Dooby lay, both still unconscious. He knelt and put a finger to each of their throats, checking for a pulse. They seemed stable and were breathing evenly. Hairy began to re-arrange their bodies, to make them more comfortable.

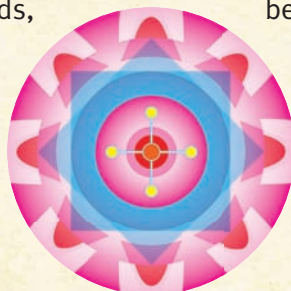
As Hairy adjusted Dilirius' body, his hand slipped out from inside his robes and fell open, revealing what had been clenched within: a clump of dried mushrooms, small bluish-grey heads and thin stalks intertwined and mashed together. Dilirius had been reaching for these when Dooby had shot him with the tranquilizer dart. Could they be more of the *Psilocybe Weillii*?

Hairy looked over at Pasdepot and Silas, who were still conversing in the doorway. It seemed like Pasdepot was explaining something to Silas, who was clearly upset and kept glancing at Hairy. Hairy knew that Silas wanted to kill him, but for some reason Pasdepot preferred to keep him alive, at least for now.

Acting without thinking, Hairy grabbed the mushrooms and hastily slipped them into his mouth. Trying carefully not to swallow anything, he started to grind the dried mushrooms between his teeth, quickly turning them to powder and mixing them with his spit. They had a flavor like bitter earth, but Hairy ignored the unpleasant taste and concentrated on his task.

Pasdepot and Silas were still speaking, so Hairy slid his hand under Dilirius' coat and frantically felt around for the inside pocket. His fingers brushed a small baggie and he pulled it out, giving it a quick glance before shoving it into his pocket with his pipe. It had a pinch of gooey green herb inside and was labeled SALVIA DIVINORUM 120x.

Hairy rose slowly, still keeping an eye on his two true enemies. He glanced at the table and saw the teapot with two cups, Pasdepot's mostly empty, the other still full. He saw the jar of white cream, still open. Still frantically masticating the mushrooms, Hairy took two swift steps towards the table, quietly spat a huge wad of psychedelic saliva into the jar of Pasdepot's skin lotion, then pushed it beneath the surface and mixed



it in to the cream with one swift plunge and swirl of his index finger.

Hairy heard the door close with a click, and he looked up to see Pasdepot turning towards him.

"I thought he'd never leave," said Pasdepot, chuckling to himself and seemingly oblivious to Hairy's actions. "Enthusiastic, but misguided. Now, where were we?"

"You were telling me how you murdered my parents," said Hairy, taking a step back towards the wall and wiping his finger clean on the back of his robes.

Pasdepot sighed deeply as if wounded by Hairy's words. He walked forward and sat down at the table.

"My boy, my dear boy," said Pasdepot. "If you truly seek someone to blame for your parents' death, it is Dilirius Bake and Master Head Alwaze Duinthadope."

"Shut up," said Hairy. "You're a liar."

"No," said Pasdepot calmly. "Alwaze was the one who filled Jay's head with all this nonsense about Legalization. Alwaze is an idealistic fool who is trying to destroy everything that is so special about our sacred plant. He doesn't understand the beautiful power of the taboo, and how it is the prohibition of marijuana which makes it valuable."

"That doesn't make any sense," said Hairy angrily.

"Listen carefully to what I say, and decide for yourself," said Pasdepot, reaching into the jar and taking out a scoop of lotion. Hairy held his breath, but Pasdepot noticed nothing, and began applying the cream to the back of his neck. "If everyone was allowed to grow cannabis, then the plant would no longer be so very special. Prohibition is the fertile field in which marijuana grows! Without the laws banning this plant, there would be no Cannabis Castle and no Hempwards. It is the laws against marijuana which give the plant its power, its mystique, and its profitability."

Even though he had tried his best to swallow nothing of the mushrooms, Hairy began feeling strange, and knew that the effects of the psychedelic fungus were already starting to hit him. It was becoming difficult for him to focus his eyes, and things began to seem strangely blurred around the edges, as though he were looking through a misted window. He could only hope that the mushrooms would affect Pasdepot more than himself. He wasn't even sure exactly why he had dosed Pasdepot, or what effect he hoped the mushrooms would have.

"Hairy, you and I have many things in common," continued Pasdepot, "much more than you know."

Pasdepot stopped talking and looked into the distance, idly dipping his fingers into the laced cream and then applying a dab to the melted skin on his cheek. He rubbed it all the way in before continuing.

"I must admit that it was a surprise for me when you drew Snytcherin from the Picking Pot," said Pasdepot casually. "I was watching you on the cameras, I saw the look on your face, and I saw your lips form a lie so you could be with your friends."

Hairy didn't know what to say. He was embarrassed that Pasdepot knew his humiliating secret. Plus the walls were beginning to breathe and shimmer in a way that he knew was caused by the mushroom juices flowing through his veins.

"At that moment, I knew that you and I were destined to become allies," continued Pasdepot, his eyes glittering as he stared at Hairy, now speaking excitedly. "Because, unbelievably, the exact same thing happened to me! I also pulled the Snytcherin name, and like you I was repulsed at the idea of joining up with that lot. So just like you, I also chose the noble lie which lead to the greater truth. I knew that I belonged in Growindor, and so I chose to ignore my instructions and make the choice myself. I never told anyone, but I confess that it preyed upon my mind for a time."

Hairy said nothing. His mind was starting to drift, the scarred skin on Pasdepot's face was beginning to shift and meld into new patterns. Hairy forced himself to stay focused, trying to keep track of Pasdepot's words.

"Come on Hairy," continued Pasdepot in a cajoling tone. "You're no stickler for the rules. Aren't you the boy who lied about which House he drew? The boy who repeatedly lied to his professors and even the Master Head Duinthadope himself? The boy who cheated on his Extractions exam? Yes, you should have guessed by now that it was I who gave you those answers. I knew you would use them because you know, as I do, that sometimes we must transcend the rules, even transcend conventional morality, for the greater good."

Pasdepot's words made Hairy feel angry and confused, but he knew he had to stall for time if he was going to stay alive. He swallowed his emotions, tried ignore the mandelas forming among the scars of Pasdepot's burned flesh, and managed to reply in what he hoped was a friendly tone.

"Thank you," he said.

"It was just a small gesture," said Pasdepot. He reached down and slipped his Eyepalm out of its leather case, flicking some of the buttons with his thumb. Hairy could tell that he was using it to see through some of the school cameras. After a moment, Pasdepot turned it off and placed it upon the table.

"You know, your father truly was my friend," sighed Pasdepot. "I only wanted what was best for him. Those so-called Bongadiers always wanted to wait, and wait, as the generations pass, until the so-called perfect moment to reveal the truth to the world. But I

don't believe in waiting. We must seize the moment." Pasdepot smiled. "*Carpe diem*, I suppose Silas would say."

"What truth?" asked Hairy.

"I already told you. The great secret is that Jesus Christ used marijuana to heal and to anoint his disciples. And you, young Hairy Pothead, are the direct descendant of Jesus and his blushing bride, Mary the Magdelene. Indeed, you are their hundredth direct grandchild, the last true descendant of the Anointed Ones."

"Oh, right," said Hairy. "Well that sounds pretty cool, actually."

Pasdepot chuckled. "Yes, it does sound cool." He undid two of the buttons on his shirt, then took a scoop of lotion and put his hand under his top, rubbing the cream onto his chest and belly.

"This cream is excellent, by the way," said Pasdepot. "It is the only thing which soothes the deep pain in my skin. Coca and cannabis, an amazing combination, enhanced with Laurocapram and DMSO for increased transdermal absorption. Vacuous is a talented man. Silas did well to fetch me these lotions from Vacuous' private store-room." Hairy could see that the jar of cream was now almost empty.

"Anyways, where was I? Oh yes." Pasdepot smiled. "You and I are destined to become allies. Join with me, and I will make you king of the world! You will have wealth and power beyond the dreams of Popes and Emperors."

Hairy sat down at the table, opposite from Pasdepot. He reached one hand into his pocket and slowly opened the baggie, taking out the pinch of *Salvia Divinorum* and pushing it into the bowl of his Double-Bubbler with his thumb. "Are you serious?" he asked innocently, thinking that Pasdepot was clearly insane. "How could I become so powerful?"

"My boy, it is simplicity itself," replied Pasdepot. "I have many contacts within the Vatican, many sympathizers and friends within their ranks. Once I have the documentation that the Order of the Chalice has been hiding, which proves your true lineage as the last living descendant of Jesus and Mary, we could easily maneuver you onto the Papal throne."

The burned policeman frowned for a moment. "Somehow Duinthadope spirited the papers out of Greengolds before our agents could infiltrate their impressive security. No matter, I'll find them soon

enough." He gave a small cough. "The marijuana part we'd need to keep secret of course, so that we could get you into power with minimal fuss. But once you were on the throne..." Pasdepot grinned. "Oh, my dear boy..."

Pasdepot abruptly stood up and looked around himself in confusion. "I'm feeling a little funny," he announced, and then slowly sat down again. Hairy thought he could see beads of sweat forming on Pasdepot's face, but he wasn't sure if they were real or a hallucination. He hoped that Pasdepot was beginning to feel the effects of the mushrooms, their psychedelically active molecules being absorbed through his skin and into his bloodstream.

"A toke will settle me down," said Pasdepot, reaching out and opening the silver case that had held his Double-Bubbler pipe. He took out the bag of marijuana and placed another bud into the bowl of the pipe, then picked up the pipe and brought it to his lips. He took the lighter into his hand and applied flame to the bowl, drawing in a huge toke. He stretched out his hand to pass the pipe to Hairy, putting his other hand to his mouth and preparing to expel a huge cough. Hairy took the pipe from Pasdepot's hand, their fingertips brushing as he did so.

Suppressing a shudder, Hairy watched as Pasdepot began to give great, wracking coughs. In what he hoped would be one smooth motion, Hairy slipped Pasdepot's pipe into one pocket while pulling out his own, identical Double-Bubbler from the other, pre-loaded with the *Salvia Divinorum*. He scooped the lighter from where Pasdepot had dropped it on the table, applied flame to the bowl, and began to inhale.

Keeping an eye on Pasdepot, who was still recovering from his cough, Hairy inhaled only until he could begin to taste the *Salvia* smoke. Immediately his skin began to tingle, a quiet buzzing filled his ears, and his field of vision narrowed slightly. Then the walls of the room seemed to take a deep breath, and Hairy felt as if his body was getting both larger and smaller at the same time. Trying to maintain his composure, he passed his pipe to Pasdepot, hoping desperately that the malevolent cop wouldn't notice his deception.

Pasdepot took the pipe and picked up the lighter. Holding one in each hand, he fixed Hairy with his stare and grinned nastily.

"Hairy, can you imagine the profits we could make? The church already makes such great profit from fake



miracles, imagine the money to be made with a monopoly on the real ones!” Pasdepot’s eyes were glittering with manic delight, and Hairy could hear each one of Pasdepot’s words echoing long after it was spoken. “We could establish a world-wide distribution network, producing miraculous anointing oils and healing salves while ensuring that we retained global control over the cultivation of this plant!”

Pasdepot brought Hairy’s loaded pipe to his lips, sparked the lighter and took a long haul, inhaling mightily. He completed the toke, placed the pipe upon the table, then his eyes opened wide and he just stopped moving. Pasdepot sat in silence, suddenly stunned and frozen, his eyes locked upon some distant vision, as the combined force of the mushrooms and the salvia gripped his entire mind.

“Woah...” said Pasdepot after a long silence, before trailing off.

Hairy stood up tentatively, half-expecting Pasdepot to snap out of his trance at any moment. But the burned cop sat immobile, his eyes staring blankly, his mouth open into an O of surprise, thin trails of smoke still escaping from his nose. He was completely detached from reality, listening and looking at something only he could see.

Still feeling the effects of the smoke and mushrooms mingling in his mind, Hairy turned and ran to the door of the room. He hoped to escape, to find Duinthadope, or even Vape, and tell them about Pasdepot and Splifpassie. Hairy grabbed at the door handle, was relieved to find the door was unlocked, and pulled it open.

Behind the door was Fluffy, her teeth bared in a vicious snarl, muscles tensed, ready to leap at Hairy’s throat.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

A Desperate Chase



Hairy had no time to react before Fluffy leaped directly at him, knocking him backwards onto the floor and sending his glasses flying off of his face. Hairy tried to defend himself, putting up his arms to block the dog’s long, sharp teeth, struggling to get up from the canine’s crushing weight. Fluffy’s snarls filled Hairy’s ears and

he could feel the dog’s hot, wet breath against his face.

Hairy’s vision was blurred without his glasses, and the combined effect of the mushrooms and salvia meant he was beginning to see trails behind every moving object. For a moment, Fluffy seemed as if she had three heads, each one viciously barking and biting at Hairy.

Hairy grabbed desperately at Fluffy’s collar, trying to pull the dog back from sinking its teeth into his throat. Behind him, he could hear Pasdepot shouting out some strange words.

“No bloody or unbloody change of society can eradicate the evil in man!” yelled Pasdepot, his mind fully in the grip of his intense psychedelic vision. “As long as there will be men, there will be malice, envy and hatred!”

Suddenly Fluffy shifted her weight, and stuck her sharp nose into Hairy’s belly. Hairy prepared to have his guts ripped open, but instead she bit her teeth only into the fabric of his robes, tearing open his inside pocket.

Hairy pulled himself back and was raising his fist in a desperate attempt to punch Fluffy in the eye, when he suddenly saw what she was after. Fluffy pulled the crumbled Scooby Snack from Hairy’s torn pocket, swallowed it in one gulp, then began licking up the crumbs from Hairy’s leg and the dungeon floor. Hairy silently thanked Gon for stealing the snack from Hogride’s stash.

“Endless war and eternal struggle! These are the best hope for all peoples to be secure against the internal threat of decadence, sloth, and pleasure!” yelled Pasdepot. “Perpetual war against a perpetual enemy is the only way to ward off decay!”

Fluffy looked up at Hairy, and for a moment boy and dog locked eyes. Hairy felt an empathic wave pass between him and the Doberman. He became aware of the dog as a distant relative, a part of the same universal force that flowed through all living things. In a psychedelic flash, Hairy felt as if he understood the dog, even as if in some strange way he *was* the dog, and the dog was him. His fear of Fluffy vanished, and the Doberman suddenly licked Hairy’s face.

Hairy glanced over at Pasdepot, who was standing and looking off into the distance, pausing in his tirade as if waiting for applause from his invisible audience. The officer’s mouth was foaming, his eyes were wild and unfocused.

Hairy looked back to Fluffy. “Sic him girl!” he said, pointing the dog towards Pasdepot. “Go get him!”

Fluffy took off like a missile, crossing the room in a single bound, then leaping at Pasdepot, her mouth

open to deliver a ferocious bite.

"If the enemy cannot be found, then it must be invented!" yelled Pasdepot. "In this context, marijuana is the..."

Pasdepot never got to finish his sentence, as Fluffy crashed into him, knocking him to the ground, flipping over the table and chairs, sending Pasdepot's Eyepalm and Hairy's bong tumbling.

Hairy reached out and felt for his glasses, putting them on as he rose and ran over to the toppled table. He watched Pasdepot struggling helplessly against Fluffy, then quickly scooped up the unbroken bong and Eyepalm and ran for the door once more.

Hairy felt a wave of relief as he escaped from the room and entered the empty hallway. He quickly closed the door behind him, catching a last glimpse of Pasdepot still beneath Fluffy, who was ferociously biting and clawing at the burned cop.

Hairy frantically started flipping switches on Pasdepot's Eyepalm, scanning through the nearby cameras, hoping to spot a friendly face roaming the halls. He prayed that he would see Agros Roach, Vacuous Vape, even Shakey Bagbottoms! As he desperately switched between the camera views, Hairy noticed that Pasdepot's Eyepalm was slightly different than his own; it had some extra buttons and a modified design.

It took a few seconds for Hairy to figure out that there were cameras that this unit could access but which had been somehow blocked from his own. Hairy switched to the first of these hidden cameras, and then the second and the third. What he saw made his mouth go dry and his heart beat like a drum. The adrenaline rush gave Hairy a moment of clarity, making the psychedelic trails and intense colors fade back for a few seconds. He kept flipping through the hidden cameras, seeing the same terrifying image over and over again.

Each of the hidden cameras was trained upon a thickly stacked, carefully structured mass of explosives. There were twelve in all, and a thirteenth camera displayed an empty section of hallway, in the maintenance tunnel beneath the Professor's Spa. When Hairy switched to the schematic diagram of the Cannabis Castle, he saw that each of the twelve sets of explosives was represented by a tiny red fist. The points were scattered around the school, and seemed to be strategically placed at major pillars and supporting internal walls. They were all hidden in secret corridors, maintenance tunnels, and other out of the way places.

Hairy gasped as he realized the full meaning of what he was seeing. Pasdepot and Silas meant to demolish the Cannabis Castle, killing all of the students and professors, and eliminating Hempwards forever!

Fingers shaking, Hairy scanned through more cam-

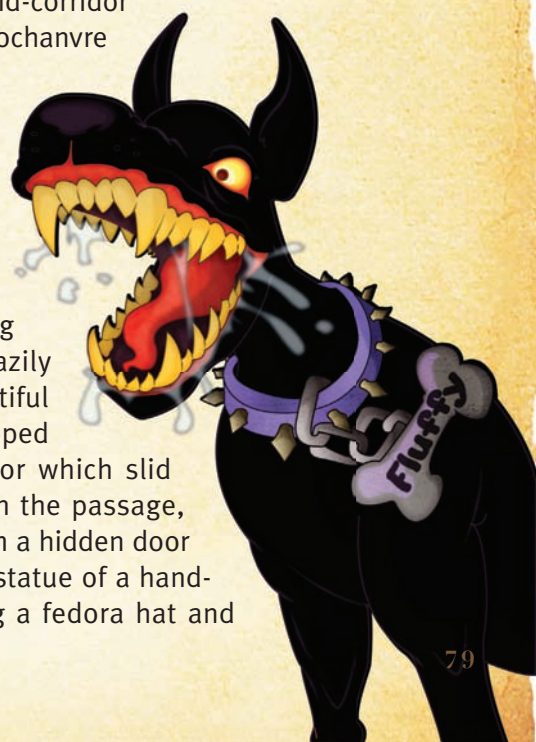
eras, desperately trying to find Silas. Finally Hairy spotted him, back in disguise with his fake dreadlocks and dark sunglasses both firmly in place. Silas was making his way down a dimly lit corridor on the other side of the school, pushing a covered equipment cart in front of him. He was heading in the direction of the thirteenth red fist, located in the center of the school, and Hairy knew that the albino monk must be bringing the last set of explosives to their final destination.

Hairy started to jog down the dungeon corridors, moving as quickly as he could while still checking the Eyepalm for any nearby students or professors, and keeping track of Silas' movements. The effects of the Salvia Divinorum were beginning to fade away; it was a quick-acting hallucinogen and Hairy had only inhaled tiny wisps of smoke. The effects of the mushrooms persisted however, subtly heightening Hairy's perception of sounds and colors as he ran through the castle. He wondered what state of mind Pasdepot was in, and he hoped for the safety of Dilirius and Dooby, who he had been forced to abandon.

Hairy clicked the Eyepalm to a new camera, and spotted a figure in the shadows down a corridor full of statues. He checked, and saw that the camera was trained upon a nearby hallway. Hairy slowed to a jog and examined the Eyepalm image. It now looked like two people, they were hiding behind a sculpture in the Hall of Theatrics, where dozens of statues honored Hempwards graduates who had achieved success on the stage or screen.

Could the shadowy figures be allies working with Silas and Pasdepot? Or perhaps it was Agros Roach and someone else... Hairy just hoped it was someone who could help him, or help to get a Professor. He decided to take a chance and check it out.

Hairy stopped mid-corridor and pushed in an Isochanvre brick on the wall beside him, directly below the bottom left corner of a long hempen tapestry depicting Arabian harem-girls lounging by the pool and lazily smoking from plentiful hookahs. Hairy slipped into the secret door which slid open and ran down the passage, soon emerging from a hidden door in a wall behind a statue of a handsome man wearing a fedora hat and



holding a joint in his hand. A plaque identified him as Robert Mitchum.

Hairy scooted past other glamorous-looking statues, including one of a man sitting naked, bongos on his lap, loaded bong on his knee.

"Hello?" called Hairy. "I know you're here somewhere! Come out, it's an emergency!"

Puffintuff student Indo Zoomer emerged from behind a statue of a beautiful girl in a bikini who was toking from an apple bong, her plaque said Charlize Theron. He was followed by Rastalaw Grinder Lionah Judah. Indo was blushing furiously as he struggled to do up the buttons on his shirt, but Lionah was as composed and precocious as ever. Clearly they had come here to share a romantic interlude away from other students. Although he barely knew Lionah, Hairy felt a small surge of jealousy.

"Whatchya waan, supatoka?" began Lionah, "I and I thought ya was still wit the doctah."

"Listen, this is important!" said Hairy desperately. "You must go find a professor!" Hairy knew he looked frantic and he hoped they would take him seriously. He wasn't sure if he could explain the urgency of the situation in a few short sentences. "Run! Find some people! No, actually, hang on!"

Hairy glanced down at Pasdepot's Eyepalm, momentarily ignoring Lionah's and Indo's confusion. He flipped through the castle schematics, mapping the fastest route for them to find help.

"Go down to the end of this corridor," said Hairy after a moment. "Turn left, and run up the stairwell. Stop at the sconce that has the statue of Shiva with his eight arms outstretched. Twist his third and fifth hands at the same time, and then go through the door that will open up behind him. Follow that corridor, and you'll come out in the Hallway of Hempsters. Turn left and you'll soon be at the Professor's dormitory. Start yelling and banging on doors until you get some attention. Get some people together, and tell them there's an emergency in the maintenance tunnel underneath the Prof's spa. Got it?"

"The Professors have a spa?" asked Indo.

"Yes, but they don't like the students to know about it," said Hairy. "Tell them Splifpassie's gone mad, he wants to destroy the school! Now go!"

"Bodderation!" said Lionah forcefully. "I and I always thought there was sump'm odd bout tha Splifpassie mon. I and I always knew dem was fake casco dreads, not bashy dreads like da Mistah Hairy Tokermom!" She sidled up to Hairy as she spoke, touching his thick, clumped hair and sending a shiver down his spine despite everything else that was going on. Indo glared at him for a moment, but Hairy took Lionah's wrist

firmly in his hand.

"This is serious," said Hairy, looking at them both. "You have to go and get help, now!"

"Zeen Hairy, I and I mek ten toe turbo," said Lionah, finally convinced by the intensity of his words. Both she and Indo did as Hairy demanded, taking off at a run. Consulting the Eyepalm once more, Hairy headed off in the opposite direction.

"Where are you going?" called out Indo.

"To stop Silas... I mean Splifpassie!" replied Hairy. "Just go!"

Hairy sprinted down the Hempwards corridors, his chest aching as the exercise re-opened the internal wounds on his lungs from the flaming bong hit. Soon he had no choice but to stop and lean against a corridor wall to catch his breath. He felt sick and woozy, and lowered his head between his knees.

Suddenly Hairy coughed, then vomited up a mouthful of blood and bile. Wiping his mouth on his robes in grim determination, and ignoring the strange symbols and mandelas that seemed to form in the pattern of his fluids on the dungeon floor, Hairy took off again at a jog. He knew he had to reach Silas before he could set the final explosive, or else the Cannabis Castle would be destroyed.

Finally, after an eternity of jogging down long castle corridors and ducking through secret passages, his mind reeling from the steadily growing effects of the mushrooms, Hairy reached the entrance to the maintenance tunnel which led beneath the Professors' Spa.

He reached down and slid open the manhole cover beneath his feet, then climbed down metal rungs into the tunnel below. Dozens of thick pipes stretched over his head, going off in all directions, bringing water and hemp diesel fuel throughout the school from the reservoirs below. To Hairy's eyes, the pipes were slowly undulating like long metal snakes.

Hairy went cautiously down the dimly lit corridor, turned the corner and saw Silas standing in a juncture of two tunnels, next a central pillar, attaching wires to a timer on top of a large pile of explosives. Silas turned, saw Hairy, and cursed.

"Merda!"

Hairy stopped, gasping for breath. He knew he could not beat Silas in a fight.

"Since you are here, Pasdepot has somehow been defeated," said Silas calmly, turning to the explosives. "So there is no more need to wait." He reached out and flicked a pair of switches, and a red number 420 appeared on the small digital display. The clock began to count down the seconds: 419... 418... 417...

"When this one goes off," said Silas, "the others will all also be triggered. In seven minutes, Hempwards will

be destroyed. You and I will be dead, along with every student and professor in this damnable school. Praise be to God!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

The Final Countdown



hy?" asked Hairy frantically. "Why do you want to destroy Hempwards?"

"I'm going to kill you now," said Silas, drawing his long knife from under his robes. "I will suffer my death better knowing you have been slain."

Hairy took a few paces back to the edge of the tunnel. The hallucinogens flowing through Hairy's mind made Silas' face seem to shift and contort, becoming even more menacing and evil as the shadows stretched and altered his features. Hairy could also see Silas' shimmering aura, it was colored sulfur yellow and hung in the air around him like a ghost.

"Why are you doing this?" asked Hairy again, hoping to keep Silas talking. "Why do you hate Hempwards so?"

"Marijuana was put on earth by Satan, to tempt us into sin," said Silas, his voice echoing hollowly in the tunnel. "Destroying marijuana plants purges the earth of her sin."

"But you... I've seen you smoke pot, many times!" said Hairy in indignation.

"You never saw me smoking your foul Devil's weed!" spat Silas, taking another step towards Hairy. "The reason I used only my personal smoking blend was because it contained a special mix of herbs, artfully crafted to resemble marijuana to any but the most discerning eye. It's called Hydrokronic, I ordered a large supply from an ad in the back of *High Times* magazine. It doesn't get you the slightest bit high, but it looks like real marijuana."

Hairy couldn't believe what he was hearing.

"Are you working with Narco? Did you help him sabotage my bong?"

"Bah!" said Silas angrily, stabbing at the air with the long blade. "That meddling Narco ruined the bong trap I had prepared for you. If he hadn't disabled your lighters, the explosion would have been bigger and more deadly, you would surely not have survived."

"That was you who did that?" asked Hairy, comprehension dawning. "You also shot Agros and Justin,

didn't you?"

"That was the night I encountered Dilirius in the hallway," said Silas, taking a small step towards Hairy. "Agros had stumbled across Dilirius during his rounds, and so Dilirius shot Agros with his damned Bongadier tranquilizer gun. I heard the noise and managed to catch up to Dilirius. We struggled, and in the process we both shot that meddlesome student Justin. Dilirius escaped me, but having his rifle gave me the perfect chance to eliminate Kiseru."

"Why Kiseru?"

"No special reason, we just needed a distraction to draw attention away from me. The hunt for the Golden Eggs was merely a ruse, to ensure that Dilirius' tranquilizer gun, upon which I had placed Taima's fingerprints, would be found by a student."

"But why did you..." began Hairy, but he was interrupted by Silas.

"Enough talk!" said the albino monk, waving his blade menacingly and moving in closer to Hairy. "Now it is time for you to die."

Silas lifted the blade into the air, then raised his head and opened his mouth, looking past Hairy in surprise. Hairy took the chance to stumble backwards a few steps, then turned and saw the welcome sight of Hogride running towards them at full speed, his massive bulk nearly filling the entire tunnel. To Hairy's eyes, Hogride's aura was a bright orange, shimmering like a burning flame.

"Aaargh!" yelled Hogride, ignoring Silas' fighting stance and knocking the blade from his grip with a single swipe of his massive fist. Hogride then grabbed Silas with both hands and effortlessly flung him against the wall, then drove a brick-like fist into the disguised monk's head, sending him slumping instantly into unconsciousness.

"No!" yelled Hairy, realizing too late that they would need to question Silas to discover how to stop the explosives from detonating.

"Are yeh alright?" asked Hogride, turning to Hairy and grabbing his shoulders in a meaty grip.

"Yeah, he didn't even touch me," replied Hairy, feeling great relief that Hogride was there to protect him.

Hairy heard the sounds of more running feet, and turned to see Duinthadope jogging down the tunnel, his long beard flopping out behind him, closely followed by Indo and Lionah.

"Hairy, Hogride, what's going on?" asked Duinthadope, panting to catch his breath. His aura was a calming, soft purple.

"I got captured by Pasdepot, he's been hiding in the castle," said Hairy, causing everyone to gasp in unison. "I managed to escape, but Splifpassie was working with

Pasdepot. Splifpassie is really a monk named Silas. He's been hiding explosives all over the school, and unless we disable this detonator very soon, Hempwards and everyone in it will go up in smoke in..." Hairy glanced at the timer, "365 seconds."

"I see," said Duinthadope.

"Look on this map," said Hairy, showing the Master Head the schematic map of Cannabis Castle as displayed on the Eyepalm.

"Where did you get this device?" asked Duinthadope.

"It belonged to Pasdepot," replied Hairy. "Those red fists are all explosives, and they're all tied into this single detonator. This is serious!"

"Indeed," said Duinthadope slowly. He walked to the mound of explosives, and peered at the timer and detonator through his half-moon spectacles. "So," he continued slowly, "does anyone here know how to disable this thing?"

There was a pause, as Duinthadope looked slowly at Hogride, then at Hairy, then at the shocked faces of Indo and Lionah, then at the unconscious form of Silas.

The clock continued its steady countdown. 321... 320... 319...

"I do," said a gruff voice from down the tunnel. They all turned, and saw the unkempt figure of Dilirius Bake stagger out of the shadows, holding an Eyepalm in his hand. His aura was pale and weak, a barely glowing turquoise.

"You!" yelled Hogride, clenching his fists and starting towards Dilirius.

"No Hogride!" yelled Duinthadope.

"He helped kill Jay an' Mary-Jane!" roared Hogride, grabbing Dilirius by the throat and lifting him off of the ground.

"Gaaack..." said Dilirius, his face turning purple.

"Put him down!" yelled Duinthadope and Hairy in unison.

Hogride slowly released Dilirius, who leaned against the wall, gasping for breath.

"Hogride," said Duinthadope calmly, "there's a bomb about to go off. Perhaps we can all discuss this later?"

302... 301... 300...

"I think I can disarm it," said Dilirius weakly, walking over to the stack of explosives and examining the timer. "Does anyone have a screwdriver?"

No one replied, but Hogride began patting down his pockets.

"I think I've got one 'ere somewhere," he said, dropping to one knee and pulling stuff out of his pockets. A growing pile of nick-knacks and random objects began to form on the floor in front of him: a big ring of keys, a

pocket bong, a chipped glass pipe, six assorted packs of rollies, a pair of cigar scissors, a plastic herb grinder, three small shiny rocks, a leather pouch, a handful of oddly-shaped dice, a long pin and a butter knife (both with blackened tips), a pack of chewing gum, a pair of tweezers, a wine bottle cork, a hollow plastic pen casing, a stack of ticket stubs, and on it went.

"Okay," said Dilirius, looking down at the contents of Hogride's pocket and picking up the butter knife. "There's my screwdriver. Here," he continued, grabbing the gum and passing it to Duinthadope, "chew on this until it's sticky." Dilirius began muttering to himself while picking out various items.

"A flexible conductor... a hollow tube... Oh, a cork! Excellent. Scissors, an insulator, yes, yes, alrighty then."

Dilirius took his pile of stuff and placed them onto the stack of explosives.

224... 223... 222...

"How did you get here?" asked Hairy,



unable to restrain his curiosity. He heard his own words echoing in his mind, and for a brief moment he wasn't even sure if he had spoken out loud.

"I used my Eyepalm to find you," replied Dilirius, unscrewing the back of the timer. "I awoke to the sound of a gun being fired. By the time I was totally back in my body, the only person there was the unconscious Dooby. Oh, and a dog was there, a Doberman pinscher, wounded from a gunshot, but alive."

"Fluffy!" said Hogride, turning around and sprinting down the tunnel.

"I recovered my Eyepalm, and Jay's too," continued Dilirius, taking the other Eyepalm from his pocket and tossing it to Hairy with one hand. "Here you go."

To Hairy's eyes, the Eyepalm left a trail of light in the air before he caught it. Surprised with his own dexterity, Hairy glanced guiltily at Duinthadope who was still chewing hard on a huge wad of gum, then slipped the device into his pocket.

"That dart was powerful," said Dilirius, chuckling for the first time as he picked up the scissors. "But I've been on stronger and longer trips than that!"

"These are hemp-based explosives," said Duinthadope, picking up a stick of dynamite, "perhaps part of Pasdepot's twisted humor. I recognize their design. These are old, from 1930, when DuPont was manufacturing dynamite from hemp hurds."

"Oh the irony!" said Dilirius bitterly, clipping wires and adjusting the insides of the clock.

"Stop tha jibberjabber and defuse the bomb!" shouted Lionah desperately, her soft pink aura flaring red.

178... 177... 176...

Dilirius worked in silence, and then Hairy heard a click and his heart skipped a beat. He turned and saw it was only Duinthadope lighting up a huge joint. The chamber filled with the scent of Lemon Hashplant as the Master Head calmly took a mighty toke and passed the joint to Dilirius. Dilirius put the joint between his lips and continued working on the timer.

"There's a deadman's switch on the timer," said Dilirius. "If I just disable the timer the whole thing will go off instantly. I need to bypass the switch, it's a bit tricky."

Dilirius took the joint from his lips and passed it to Hairy, looking him in the eyes.

"This is just like the one that Pasdepot set at your parent's home," said Dilirius softly. "I was trying to disarm that one too, but I missed the deadman switch. I didn't mean to set it off." Tears began to form in his eyes. "I didn't mean for Jay and Mary-Jane to be killed in the fire."

Hairy felt as if he could see into Dilirius' soul, and he knew that Dilirius was speaking the truth. "How did it

happen?" he asked quietly.

"When I found out that Pasdepot was going to visit Jay and Mary-Jane," said Dilirius, his voice raspy, "I raced to their home. There was a cop car outside, so I snuck inside through the back basement entrance, and saw an unguarded explosive, like this one, right next to their furnace. I heard Pasdepot speaking to Jay upstairs, and I decided to try and disarm the explosive first."

Dilirius' voice cracked. "I almost had it, but I made a mistake, I missed the deadman's switch and it ignited. I had no choice but to flee out the back door, narrowly escaping the flames. But the police were already there, they nabbed me on the way out, and the next thing I knew I was in a Vatican dungeon. My inquisitors told me that it was my actions which killed my dear friends."

"They wasn't killed in tha fire," said Hogride, standing at the end of the tunnel, holding an unconscious Fluffy in his arms, a bloody wound on her rear leg. "They was both shot."

"What do you mean?" asked Dilirius, momentarily stopping his work on the timer, looking at Hogride with an odd mixture of hope and sadness in his eyes.

112... 111... 110....

"When I got ta Jay an' Mary-Jane's home, tha house was ablaze," explained Hogride, advancing down the tunnel. "I avoided tha coppers out front an' went through tha neighbor's backyard, then over tha fence an' up into tha second-floor window. That was tha nursery, it 'ad not yet been touched by tha flames. I opened tha door ta tha nursery, picked up tha little tyke and then leaped from tha window an' back to my motorcycle."

"But before I scooped up young 'airy," continued Hogride, tears starting to form in his eyes, "I opened tha nursery door an' looked into tha home. There was fire everywhere, and I saw tha bodies of Jay an' Mary-Jane," Hogride gave a wracking sob, "they was dead, both shot! I thought tha 'ouse was going ta cave in, an' there was nothin I could do. I escaped an' radioed Duinthadope an' he tol' me to meet him at tha Straitley's. But Jay and Mary-Jane didn't die in tha fire, Pasdepot killed them first."

"Dilirius, mon, you gotta keep working mon!" said Lionah nervously.

Dilirius silently returned to his work, sticking out his hand for Duinthadope to give him the well-chewed gum and wrapping it around a pair of exposed wires.

"So Dilrius isn't at all responsible for my mom and dad dying?" asked Hairy. "It was all Pasdepot?"

"Yes Hairy," said Duinthadope. "It sounds to me like it was Dilirius' mistake which saved your life, and which almost killed Pasdepot. Without the sudden intervention of the fire, Pasdepot would have completed his

murderous evening by killing you in the crib, and then burned down your home. Instead he was trapped in the fire and barely escaped alive.”

87... 86... 85...

Dilirius’ hands began to shake as he wrapped the chewing gum wrapper around another exposed wire. Hairy could see tears streaming down his cheeks. “I didn’t do it...” he said to himself in amazement. “It wasn’t me... by the Green Man!”

His hands were moving faster now, using the needle to poke around inside a small metal casing with wires coming out on all sides. “Jay... oh Jay... and Mary-Jane... my dear friends...” Dilirius’ face was set in grim determination. “I will not fail your son,” he said quietly. “I will preserve the line.”

Hairy felt strangely calm. He realized that he was still holding the half-smoked joint in his hand. It was no longer burning, and he reached into his pockets for a lighter, wondering if Dilirius could really disarm the bomb, or if this would be the last toke of his short life.

He heard a click, and looked up to see Dilirius holding Hogride’s Zippo lighter, the flaming silver skull grinning in relief. Dilirius was smiling, his face stained with tears, holding out the lighter for Hairy to light his joint.

Hairy looked at the clock. It was stopped at 42 seconds.

They were alive. Hempwards had been saved!

CHAPTER THIRTY

The Off-season



Hairy stood at the edge of the school grounds, waiting for the Magic Bus to take him back home to Mainstream Drive. He couldn’t believe how quickly the school year had gone, especially the last two weeks after that fateful night spent roaming the castle dungeons.

Once Dilirius had disarmed the explosives, they had all smoked another few celebratory joints from Duinthadope’s personal stash. Lionah had been so relieved that she had given everyone there a big hug, including Hairy, while Indo looked on with a frown. Hogride had then dragged the unconscious Silas to the castle dungeons for questioning, and Hairy had not seen him again.

After a brief discussion, Duinthadope had decided that Dilirius should make a hasty departure. They all knew that Dilirius was not in league with Pasdepot, and that he had not been the one who killed the Potheads, but Duinthadope said that he would need some time to speak with the Council of Canabians, to ensure that Dilirius would be safe from misguided reprisals.

Agros Roach and Duinthadope had made a thorough inspection of Experimental Grow Chamber #23. Dooby had vanished; presumably he had woken up and made his escape. Hairy felt sure the little man would be watching over him, even if he were no longer in sight.

A secret passage was found, extending for over a mile past the student grounds. It was through this tunnel that the hallucinating Pasdepot must have finally made his escape. Agros Roach used dogs to try and track the scarred policeman, but no trace was found. Duinthadope had ordered the tunnel closed off and entirely sealed in.

Hairy had spent a full week in the infirmary, under the watchful eye of Nurse Poppy. He had been fed hulled hempseeds in chocolate with every meal, and had so many visits from Gon, Herbonme and Hogride that he had scarcely had a moment to himself.

Gon and Herbonme had told Hairy there had been a special school assembly, and that Duinthadope had lifted the curfew for the final two weeks of the season, assuring the students that they were finally safe. Apparently, the Master Head had also told the student body that they owed their lives to Hairy Pothead, although he hadn’t given many details.

“You should have seen the expression on Narco’s face!” Gon had said, laughing. “He looked like he had just swallowed a bucket of lemons!”

The next day, Duinthadope had come down to the infirmary and brought along enough of his supersized joints to last for a very long conversation.

Hairy had finally told Duinthadope everything. First, he told him about the Eyepalm and his secret late-night adventures. To his surprise, Duinthadope had chuckled. “You’re like your father in more ways than one, Hairy.”

Next, Hairy told Duinthadope about how Pasdepot was really Ratsoff Codepipe, and how he had confessed to faking his own murder. At this news, Duinthadope took off his half-moon spectacles and rubbed his eyes. He looked tired, and for a moment, Hairy realized how old the Master Head really was.

“That is very useful information Hairy,” said Duinthadope at last. “But also it is very worrisome news. Ratsoff was a top student at Hempwards, and he was privy to many of our secrets. This explains how he was able to find Hempwards and infiltrate the school. We will need to be very careful in the future.”

Duinthadope had asked Hairy if he could keep the Eyepalm that had belonged to Pasdepot, and Hairy had agreed, surprised at the question. Duinthadope had then looked Hairy in the eyes for a moment before speaking.

"I am going to let you keep your father's Eyepalm," the Master Head had said seriously. "It is a family heirloom and Hempwards owes you a very great debt of gratitude. However, I trust that you will use it carefully and responsibly, and not abuse the powers it gives you."

Hairy had then told Duinthadope about cheating on the Extractions mid-term exam.

"Pasdepot was trying to seduce you Hairy," said Duinthadope slowly. "He wanted you to start taking shortcuts, to take the easy way instead of the honest way. And I am sorry to say that he succeeded, at least in part. You must be careful, and strive to protect your mind and your integrity. However, we'll just keep that between you and me, I don't think Vape needs to know this little detail."

Finally, his voice cracking, Hairy had told Duinthadope about how he had actually drawn Snytcherin from the Picking Pot.

"I'm sorry sir," Hairy had said sadly, thinking how much he would hate having Narco as his housemate. "Next year you can reassign me into Snytcherin."

"Hairy, when it came to choosing your House, you didn't break the rules," Duinthadope had replied, smiling broadly, his eyes once more twinkling behind his spectacles. "Here at Hempwards we value free thought, and precisely chosen words. McGanjagal always instructs the students to draw a slip of paper from the Picking Pot, then to announce the name of the house they will attend." Duinthadope had paused to take a long draw from the joint between his lips, and then exhaled a huge cloud of smoke. "But Hairy, she never ever says that students must attend the house whose name is on the paper."

Hairy's mouth had opened in surprise, and he had felt a huge weight lifted off his shoulders. However, a new weight replaced it when Duinthadope told him that he must return back to the Straitley's for the off-season.

"It's only for a few months Hairy," Duinthadope had said gently. "It is for the

best. It's the safest place for you to be."

There was still one final question that Hairy had been burning to ask. "Is it true, what Pasdepot told me, that I'm a descendant of Jesus?"

Duinthadope had smiled once again. "Hairy, your family is a special one, and you have some very famous ancestors. But the time is not yet right for you to learn everything. You must trust me when I say that when the moment comes, all will be revealed."

Before leaving, Duinthadope had given Hairy an envelope.

"This is a letter from Dilirius," the Master Head had said quietly, rising from Hairy's bedside. "He asked me to give this to you. Keep this private."

Hairy had opened the letter and recognized the same small, thin handwriting that had been on the card originally accompanying the Eyepalm. He had fought to keep his hands from trembling as he began to read.

Hairy, I've wanted to write this for some time. I am sorry that I didn't come to you earlier. I was afraid that you wouldn't trust me, and that I wouldn't be able to help watch over you if I tried to make direct contact. I have so much to tell you, but this is not the time. As a member of the Order of the Chalice, I am sworn to protect you. But even more importantly, I promised your father that I would care for you if anything ever happened to him and Mary-Jane.

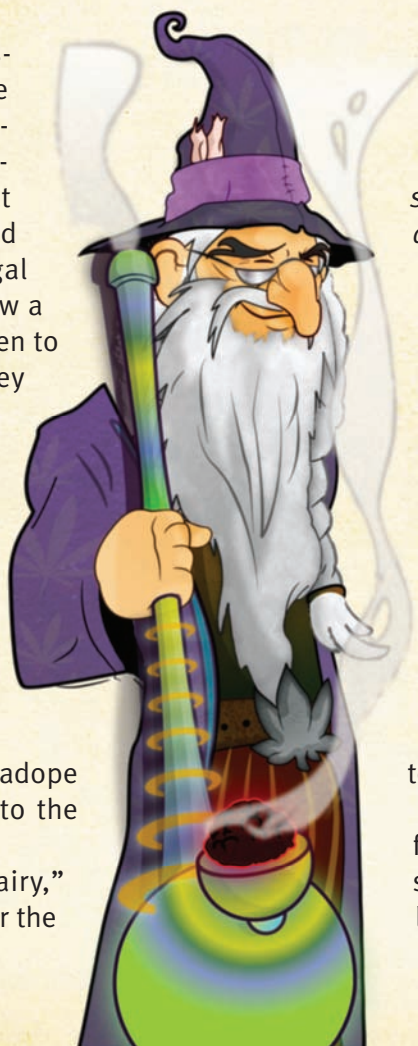
Jay made me your Ganjfather, and I would be honored to have you come and live with me one day, perhaps once I have sorted things out with the Council. If you wish, you can send me messages using the Eyepalm. I am eager to get to know you Hairy, and I regret the time, friends and family which we have both lost."

Dilirius had added a note beneath his signature.

PS. If you don't want to write back, I'll understand.

Of course Hairy would write back! He patted the note where it rested in his pocket, then pulled out his report card and smiled. Duinthadope had offered him an exemption from final exams, but Hairy had surprised himself by saying that he wanted to take the written tests anyways. But he was allowed to take them in bed in the infirmary.

Hairy had regretted his decision for a few moments once he had seen the large stack of exam papers. But he had the luxury of being able to relax in private and



take his time on the questions. Once he had fired up the vaporizer and actually started to think about the material, he found he could answer most of the questions. In the end, he had passed everything, from a "Triple A" in Toker Etiquette, to a "Low Grade" in Extractions. (In the comments section, Vape had written "Student needs to apply himself more to the Great Work.")

Hairy had also received a "Triple A" in Gardening, which wasn't a surprise since his plant had grown to an astounding 35 feet tall. ("That's exactly 420 inches!" Herbonme had exclaimed.) Headstash was covered from top to bottom with long, thick golden buds, each so coated in crystals that they sparkled in the sunlight. Yet Headstash still wasn't ready for harvest by the end of the school season in the third week of September, and so Hogride had promised to personally trim and manicure the buds, and to make sure Hairy got every last one.

"I can't leave 'empards until a few weeks after tha students leave," Hogride had told Hairy during one of his regular infirmary visits. "I have ta do some cleanin' an tidyin' up at tha Castle, ta shut things down fer tha off-season. But I figure yer plant'll be ready fer harvest in about two more weeks. I'll take care of her fer yeh, don't yeh worry."

Hairy had received a respectable "Mid-Grade" in Cannatheism, but more importantly, Professor Kiseru had returned for the last few days of the school year. The rest of the students were simply told that Kiseru's family emergency had been resolved, but Hairy knew that the professor's name had been cleared.

There had been no final exam for Defence Against the Drug Cops, and Splifpassie's absence was explained away by the usual unspecified family emergency. Duinthadope himself had taught the remaining few classes and given out their grades. Hairy had received a "Triple A" along with Duinthadope's comment that he had done well showing practical appplication of the necessary skills.

Hairy smiled to himself when he thought about his reception back at the Growindor common room when he had finally been released from the infirmary. Herbonme and Gon had escorted him back through the long castle corridors, but when he had stepped through the doorway, Hairy had been shocked to see his Growindor Housemates waiting for him, with the Nimbus 4200 on

the center table, next to a large silver bowl of buds.

Olfyber Hurd had stepped forward to shake his hand and then led them all in a loud cheer for Hairy.

"Hairy Pothead, he's the best! He's got lungs that beat the rest! Hemp, Hemp, Hooray!"

With broad smiles and joints ablaze, they had all come forward to shake his hand and welcome him back to the Growindor sanctuary.

"We got it fixed," Olfyber had told him with glee, pointing at the shiny vaporizer. "But there's something even better, check this out!"

Several grinning students had moved aside to reveal a tall, glittering trophy standing on a pedestal. It was emblazoned with the words HEMPWARDS QANNABBI CHAMPIONS. Hairy had looked closer and saw that the base was covered in small plaques, each listing the names of a previous year's winning Qannabbi team.

"There's your name!" Olfyber had exclaimed, pointing to the newest, shiniest plaque on the trophy. Hairy had squinted, and then saw his name listed along with the rest of his teammates. He had run his finger along the line of plaques, and saw the one that listed his dad's team, with Jay and Dilirius' names emblazoned with the rest.

It had been a great party, and Hairy had been so honored that he almost embarrassed himself by crying with happiness and relief. But he had managed to keep a hold on his emotions and had gone to bed early, feigning a need to rest.

Now he was looking forward to the long bus ride back to the Pot Block. It would give him the chance to tell Gon and Herbonme more details about what had happened during his long night in the castle dungeons, and find out their plans for the off-season.

Duinthadope had told Hairy that his Uncle Norm and Aunt Vanilla would be waiting for him outside Route 81, to take him the rest of the way home. Hairy still wasn't too happy about the idea of returning to live with the Straitleys, but at least he still had plenty of his father's bubble hash left, to last until Hogride arrived with the buds from Headstash.

Hairy reached into his inner pocket, feeling the extra handful of *Psilocybe Weilli* that Dilirius had given him before saying goodbye. He knew what he was going to do if Studly ever dared to bother him again!

And thus concludes Hairy Pothead's first adventure.

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PUBLISHER AND EDITOR

MARC EMERY
MARC@CANNABISCULTURE.COM

CO-EDITOR

JODIE EMERY
JODIE@CANNABISCULTURE.COM

WRITER & CREATOR

DANA LARSEN
DANA@DANALARSEN.COM

ILLUSTRATOR

GARY WINTLE

LAYOUT DESIGN, PRODUCTION

GALE LEITCH
GALE@CANNABISCULTURE.COM

MAIN OFFICE: (604) 669-9069

EDITORIAL: (604) 689-0590

FAX: (604) 669-9038

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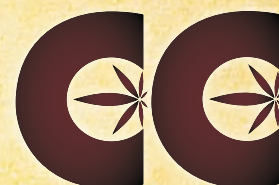
TIA WILLIAMS
ACCOUNTS@CANNABISCULTURE.COM

ADVERTISING MANAGER

RANDY SMITH
ADS@CANNABISCULTURE.COM

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